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THE

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THE

MOOR AND THE LOCH

CONTAINING

MINUTE INSTRUCTIONS IN ALL HIGHLAND SPORTS

BY

JOHN COLQUHOUN

IN TWO VOLUMES.—VOL. II.

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THE MOOR AND THE LOCH.

CORRACH-BAH; OR, A PLEA FOR THE WASTES.

How shrunk are Scotland's rugged untamed desolations! We see those mushroom larch-plantations skirting the steeps of our brown mountains, with their luxuriant verdure. The subsoil-plough, tile-draining, and all the ingenious *et-ceteras* of modern invention, have reclaimed many a bleak and barren moor, which once only served for pasture to the hardy black cattle, the unhoused hirsel of the hills. Thriving fields of yellow grain, and glancing sickles, and merry voices swelling the autumn gale, now enliven those wastes, once the chosen haunts of the bittern and the whaup. Many of the lords of the heather themselves have caught the improvement mania, and either modernise their "own grey tower," or pull it down—building a splendid mansion in its honoured stead. The wild

feudo-Highland grounds and scenery must, of course, be made to fit this upstart of a house; and many a knoll, covered with its tangled brushwood, and blazing with the yellow gold of the whin and the broom, must be levelled and swept away, to convert the whole into an English lawn.[1]

In addition to this we have the new law of entail, which will go a good way to destroy our famed nationality; and by introducing moneyed strangers, who know nothing, and feel less, of sympathy with the Highland character, will (unwittingly, perhaps) do all they can to extirpate it altogether. It is melancholy to hear some *nouveaux riches*, at Radical meetings, spouting forth their untutored volubility upon this (to me) painful subject—"If the hereditary feudal lairds and lords cannot improve their estates, they ought to sell them to those who can!"—to those pioneers of civilisation, whose chief idea of a Highland estate is that of a *good bargain*, and whose notion of raising the Highland character consists in assimilating it to their own! They may give employment,[2] and money for

[1] "Fortunately for mankind, as some counterbalance to that wretched love of novelty, which originates in selfishness, narrowness, and conceit, and *which especially characterises all vulgar minds*, there is set in the deeper places of the heart such affection for the signs of age, that the eye is delighted even by injuries which are the work of time."—'Modern Painters,' by John Ruskin, M.A.

[2] A great outcry has been raised against the "Highland clearances," and much obloquy cast upon the proprietors of some remote islands and localities for turning adrift their dependants. Many of these poor creatures, although suffering every privation, refuse to emigrate, even when given all reasonable encouragement. It is a hard case, but what

money's worth, but all their efforts will be unavailing to transform the Gael into their *beau idéal* of a peasant; and never can they gain that place in his heart, only to be occupied by his feudal chief of ages past. Our Queen better knew her northern people, when, upon her first memorable visit to this *land of caterans*, she, like the great chieftainess, cast herself freely, fully, upon the unbought devotion of her clans.

Perhaps I feel too strongly on this subject; and I know I am open to the remark that feudalism implies dependence, while no feeling of this sort is compatible with improvement in character or country. But are we sure that *all* we term improvement is more than simple alteration? And is there one mountain-born son of Albyn who will not agree with me in preferring our unspoiled, unplanted glens, our wild game, and our national distinctness, to all the busy important bustle of modern civilisation, which has already transformed many of our most romantic nooks into models of "suburban villas"? I well recollect offering to show an exquisite specimen of real Highland taste and beauty, with all its wild character preserved, to a worthy metropolitan: his answer was, "Ah! thumthing in the Englith thtyle!!" He had ascended Ben Lo-

can the lairds do? To give employment, by reclaiming such land, is out of the question, and to support such numbers of starving people would ruin the estate. The only resource, now that the kelp-trade has failed, is to reduce the population, at the same time enlarging the *grazing* farms (the surest return in the Highland districts), and giving leases to respectable *Highland* tenants.

mond shortly before. The day was lovely, only a few light clouds flitting over the brown heath or scattered rocks, between long intervals of brilliant sunshine: the lights and shadows upon the opposite mountains seemed formed to call up feelings and recollections of days long gone by. Our citizen, however, returned vastly delighted at having rather called up so good an appetite for dinner. After having satisfied his craving, he abruptly broke out, "Would it be pothible to fill up Loch Lomond?" His own genius anticipated the reply—"Ah! by tumbling Ben Lomond into it, I thuppothe! Now, how many acres of good land would you gain?" "Well," thought I, "this is improvement with a vengeance;" and I should, with great pleasure, have pitched in his little fat body, by way of a sleeping partner to the doomed mountain! However, upon thinking over his strange proposal, it struck me that it was a plain, matter-of-fact, pounds-shillings-and-pence view of the subject; and if I was fairly attacked upon that point, I should not stand half a chance in the argument. No doubt the country will be richer the more it is cultivated; but few Highlanders, with any touch of imagination, would barter, even for this, its former lonely and desolate grandeur, with its accompaniments of wild birds and animals; or would, without a pang, change the bold heart and ready hand of the natives into those of passive and obedient serfs. If driven to make a choice, I must shelter myself under the shrewd logic

of a fellow-countryman, who, having affirmed that the grapes of Scotland were better than those of England, and being asked to prove it, coolly answered, "I maun premeese, I like them soor!" Like him, I must also premise, that I would not give the frowning crag or barren fell for all the rich slopes and verdant valleys of the Lowlands.

There are two kinds of wild scenery pre-eminently deserving the epithet "sublime;" but to feel their overpowering effect, they must be seen with every associated object. You cannot view the sea-cliff in perfection unless there is nothing before you but the boundless, fathomless ocean. An arm of the sea, or a firth, will not do; their waves are never those rolling, booming surges, which impress one with the vastness from which they come. There must also be the countless variety of sea-birds,[1] some thickly studding every jagged projection, and others riding the swelling billow, their bright plumage glancing in the beams of the morning sun. My greater favourite, however, is the wild and lonely mountain, with its crags, its bare heath, its solitary moor-loch, and, above all, the eyrie of the golden eagle, dread monarch of the mist. Spring is the season to enjoy both in per-

[1] The white-tailed eagle, or erne, not unfrequently hatches on the overhanging rocks of the sea, and by her gallant swoops and screams, when her territory is invaded, adds much to the impression of wildness and grandeur. Equally congenial a haunt for its nidification is the island of a moor-loch, if there are any old trees to fix the eyrie upon, when it finds its hunting-ground in the neighbouring morasses; whence it has acquired the name of the bog-eagle.

fection, as all the winged tenants have then taken possession of their temporary abodes. Every variety may be seen and studied; while from their tameness a nearer view may be obtained than at any other time. Few springs have passed without my enjoying either a marine or mountain treat, sometimes both, and the pleasure has then been heightened by contrast. A slight sketch of one of these later excursions may be admissible here.

In the recesses of the Black Mount forest, very considerably above the level of the sea, there is a moorland lochan, about a mile long by half a mile broad, called in Gaelic, Lochan Nahachalach; and a little to the east, connected by a rocky brook, is Loch Bah (the drowning loch), about three miles long by a mile broad. The shores of these lochs, if shores they may be called, which consist of an occasional strip of yellow sand, are seldom trodden by any foot but that of the wild deer or the otter. Jagged points of rock continually obtrude themselves above the blue-grey water; and the eyrie of the sea-eagle fixed upon the top of an old birch, on a rugged heathery islet of Loch Bah, while another eyrie graces an aged Scotch fir of Loch Nahachalach, completes a picture so exquisitely savage, that fancy in its wildest mood could scarcely alter or amend. On the south these lochs are bounded by an extensive morass, full of small tarns, intersected by a pretty large moor-burn; and on the east of Loch Nahachalach a steep craggy hill rises

abruptly from its side. An eyrie of the golden eagle is placed on a shelf of rock half-way up, and I have enjoyed the rare luxury of seeing both eyries at the same moment, and both queens in undisturbed possession of their thrones. Seldom any collision took place, each having her favourite hunting-ground. There was the mountain for the nobler bird, and the morass for her more vulture-shaped neighbour. They sometimes, however, had a battle in the air; but the looser form, the heavier movement, and the less daring spirit of the erne, made her no match for the mountaineer, who soon drove her screaming to her island.

In the distance may be discerned the dark forms of mountains belonging to that range called Corrach-Bah, a very favourite resort of the golden eagle. The corries which intersect them afford the richest pasture for the deer; and the hill-fox, the wild-cat, and the marten are not yet banished from those desolate precipices. It is not to be inferred, however, that the deer-forest is also a preserve for vermin. There is many a splendid hunt after the marten or the fox, which taxes the mettle both of men and dogs. And although there often are only the hounds and their quarry upon the bare mountains, and the echoes of the rocks to cheer them on, yet, to a lover of the pure picturesque, it is worth a hundred Lowland fox-hunts, with their red coats, horns, huntsmen, whippers, and all!

It was towards the end of April 1845 that, armed

with my duck-gun to storm one of these eagle-fortresses, I sailed in the Loch Goil steamboat, on my way to these favourite haunts. I had also put up two trolling-rods in compliment to the *Salmo-feroxes* of Loch Awe. We left the Broomielaw at seven o'clock on a fresh sunny morning, and paddled merrily down the Clyde. The fat rosy steward, with his quaint face of good-nature, was in high feather, and frequent in his assurances that we might expect "a pleesant sail." Under his auspices we were soon seated at a good breakfast of whitings taken out of the firth the night before. By the time we had discussed them, we were coasting the shingly beach of Loch Long; and having touched at Ardentinny, and viewed the fairyland of Glenfinart, its emerald lawn, and rampart of brown hill and tangled wood, we struck into the bleak Loch Goil. A short time brought us alongside of its primitive quay, where we deposited ourselves and luggage in the mongrel kind of coach, half boat half omnibus, which was to convey us across the isthmus separating Loch Goil from Loch Fyne. Creeping up one side of the hill at a tortoise pace, we rattled down the other at a gallop, by way of a change. A very small steamboat plies between St Catherine's and Inverary, and I was in the act of superintending the embarkation of my chattels, when a bustling official assured me that he would see them all safe. I put faith in him, and immediately began a discussion with two fellow-travellers about

the whale that had been harpooned shortly before in the loch—or the hill of Duniquoich—or the Duke's Castle—or I don't recollect what. Upon landing at Inverary my trolling-rods were missing, and no "satisfaction" to be had, as my officious friend was safe on the opposite shore, and my poor rods lying within tide-water mark! The landlord of the Argyll Arms, however, obligingly offered to send the ferry-boat and forward them next morning by the post[1] to Cladich, where I hoped to bivouac for a few days after my eagle campaign.

Having dined with my two agreeable companions, we hired an open carriage, and drove to Cladich, where we parted—they going on to Oban by Port Sonachan, and I to the Black Mount. After a long, rugged, but enjoyable drive, partly along the banks of Loch Awe, where the cuckoo was heard in every dell, or was seen poising himself upon some still leafless patriarchal thorn, and partly through the environs of the forest, I arrived at the solitary little inn of Inveroran. The forester's house was within a short dis-

[1] Generally a stout hale carle, of middle age, who walks from ten to fifteen miles and back again in a day, with the mail-bag slung at his back. The first time one of these primitive posts was dignified with a little gig equipage, he came in late, and made excuse that "he was taigled wi' a gig!" Of course he was turned off. Poor Sandy Bell had walked twenty-seven miles a-day for thirty years of his life, and at his dismissal was fresh as May. He bitterly complained that he lost, first his bread, "by thae new-fangled nonsense," and then his health, for want of exercise. He is only an instance among many who have been ruined by *cutting a dash.*

tance; so I arranged with him that we should start by daylight next morning for the eagle's eyrie, partook of Highland cheer in a snug little Cyclops of a parlour, ornamented with the horns of the red deer, and then retired to my dormitory.

Day was just breaking when I crossed the river Tulla, on my way to Peter Robertson's[1] cottage. He was standing before his door, consoling himself for his early start by a pipe of very strong tobacco. The morning was all we could wish,—calm, grey, and mild. As we passed the banks of the loch, roe-deer were quietly cropping the greensward which sloped to the water's edge, and now and then a fine buck would raise his head and look listlessly over his shoulder, as if wondering what business we had to be so soon astir. The black-cock, surrounded by his hens, was crooning his matins on the tops of the knolls, and was answered by the red-cock with many a cheery but eccentric call, from the more distant heights. A male hen-harrier was flitting stealthily above the heather, seeking his breakfast where it would be easily found, with small chance of human company at his morning meal. Now and then an Alpine hare would canter lazily away, or raise herself

[1] This model Highland deer-stalker died in the spring of 1877. He had long been a martyr to rheumatism, and the rough work of his life had told sorely on him for years before his end. Many a happy day I have passed with him, wandering over the rough hills and wild corries, or by the lonely lochans of the Black Mount forest.

upon her hind legs to listen, moving about her inquisitive ears.

For some miles we walked along the road which intersects the lower end of the forest, when Peter suddenly turned into its gloomy depths. Small flocks of deer now crossed us frequently, and sometimes a large herd would saunter past at a slow walk. Occasionally we saw their profiles on the crests of the mountains, or at feed, dotted along some distant corrie, in appearance no bigger than roes.

Peter had been entertaining me with many a hunting anecdote, or with the natural history of some of the wild denizens of the forest, when the first streak of the rising sun struck the gaunt head of a bald cliff in the centre of the mountains of Corrach-Bah. "Now, sir," suiting the action to the word, "in that craig is your eagle." A threatening crag it was; from the view I got, it seemed as steep as the side of a house from top to bottom. For the first time I felt a slight misgiving, lest the shot might be crank and difficult when the bird flew out of such a rugged mass. What if I should miss! However, I banished these craven thoughts, and marched on merrily as before.

We were still a long mile from our rocks, when a dark bird rose in the midst of them, and winged his way to the opposite mountain. Was he a buzzard? No; small as he appears, that determined flight, and free flap of the wing, can belong to no bird but the eagle. Peter looked carelessly at him. "Yon's the

cock: he'll be for the opposite hill, after bringing the hen her breakfast." He now whipped out his glass, and placing his back upon a hillock, and the glass upon his knee, looked long and anxiously through it. At last, jumping up, shutting the glass with a satisfied jerk, and looking to me with a smile, "She's on, sir." I now took his place, but it was some time, in spite of Peter's minute directions, before I could discern the eyrie. "Look, sir, to the side o' yon bushes in the face o' the craig." It was easy enough to see *them;* they seemed "moored" not "in the *rifted*" but in the *solid* "rock." When I at length detected the eyrie, it appeared no bigger than a rook's nest; and how Robertson had discovered "she was on," I was a good deal puzzled to find out. But he told me to keep my eye upon the east side of the nest, and I should see a black ball which would seem higher at some times than others, and which was caused by the eagle raising her head. My qualms returned; I saw that the eyrie was about thirty yards down in the cliff, that my footing would not be firm, and that, if the bird were so inclined, she might dash into the abyss with the speed of the wind. Peter, however, was talkative as ever, evidently in high glee that there was every chance of a shot.

We now struck off to the left, as if walking away from the eyrie. Having taken a long circuit we edged in, till we got a slope of the mountain between us and our quarry. This achieved, we walked rapidly

round till we came to its base, at the side opposite to that where the noble bird was sitting in perfect security and peace. Peter now climbed slowly up, continuing his stories to most inattentive ears. I had some faint recollection, afterwards, of a curious bird with extraordinary feet, which frequented the forest, whose history he was relating with great animation just when he gained the ridge of the mountain. There, however, all his tales were at an end. He at once relapsed into the cool and wary hunter. Creeping forward with promptitude and decision, he knew, to an inch, where to look for the eyrie among all that fantastic chaos of rocks. Beckoning me to advance, he showed the outer sticks of the nest, and pointed to a rock close to us, where lay a grouse nearly devoured, and a ptarmigan beautifully picked, but with the skin unbroken. Our attack upon the eagle began by plundering her storehouse; for Peter, rolling up the ptarmigan in his handkerchief, pocketed it as a *bonne bouche* for dinner. We now held a consultation as to the easiest way of approach. Scrambling down a hollow, we were within fifty yards of the eyrie, when a ravine intercepted our progress. I pointed to a little bank of ochre-coloured moss beyond. "That's the place," whispered Peter. Back we ducked again, over the same ground, and, crawling along the ridge, evaded the ravine. The critical moment of failure or success was now arrived. With my left knee on the bank of moss, and my right foot

planted against a rock, to prevent a slip on the steep, —my eye fixed on the outer rim of the eyrie, and Peter, mute as a stone but sharp as an arrow, awaiting the signal,—I stopped a moment to take breath. A slight nod over my shoulder, and Peter gently struck the palms of his hands together, pat—pat. It was just enough for the eagle to hear, but it seemed very loud to me. Pat—pat—pat, louder and louder. I was now getting very nervous. "Throw a stone at her!" Peter had too much generalship for that. He selected a small pebble, and threw it on the steep, directly above the eyrie. I watched every hop of the stone, lower and lower, till I saw that it must drop straight upon our victim. I knew it was now or never. Instantly, I caught sight of the bold flap of a giant wing, and the mighty bird soared majestically from the dizzy chasm. The shot was not difficult. I may say, that my aim was cool and determined. She reeled round and round, and fell headlong into the yawning abyss, quite dead. I now took a long breath, and but for Peter's delighted face, could scarcely persuade myself she had fallen. If he had either hallooed loud, or thrown straight at the eagle, she would most likely have dashed out, wheeling and tumbling—an uncertain and difficult shot. Fain would I have secured the eggs, but this was impossible without ropes, which we had neglected to bring. Peter, however, offered to send them to Cladich the next day.

I was now impatient to secure my prize. We had to descend the sloping ridge, and come round in front, at the base of the chasm. It was, certainly, a lordly fortress — a fit abode for this marauding Thane of the Wastes. Flanked by bastions and buttresses of massy rock, which guarded the stronghold on either side, and keeping watch upon its rugged eminence, the eagle's sleepless eye could detect the most minute or distant object in the valley beneath.

We searched the rough ground at the foot of the precipice for some time, without discovering the dead eagle. Indeed we both fancied that she had dropped much further off than was actually the case. At last I discovered the red-brown feathers, like a large tuft of her own heather, close to the foot of the cliff. A finer specimen could not be seen; the markings were perfect, and the plumage in first-rate order.

The sun had now risen high and clear, the surrounding mountains looked low, warm, and blue. I was now gay as Peter, and, while we tramped over moor and moss, I made him repeat his forest tales. I found that the "extraordinary feet" he had so minutely described, belonged to the night-jar, which bird, however, is rarer in the forest than in more cultivated localities. Some of his anecdotes of eagles were really worth notice, as illustrating the strength and ferocity of the bird. A couple, cock and hen, were trapped at the same bait by Robertson. As they were not seriously injured, he wished to bring them home alive.

This would have been an impossibility to most people, as there is but one way of carrying them with any degree of safety: it is by placing the enormous creature under your arm, and holding his legs, immediately above the huge claws, firmly in your hand. As long as you walk steadily, and do not shake him roughly, the eagle will remain still, and make no effort to escape. But if you stumble, or turn sharply round, it is ten to one that he fixes his talons to the bone in your thigh. Robertson was carrying the two birds in this manner, and, having come a long way, his arms became cramped, and he was trying to relieve them by leaning upon a stone dyke, when one of the savage creatures struck its claw into his leg. The pain was great, but he knew that if he attempted to extricate himself he would lose both birds. So, Spartan-like, he patiently waited till some assistance should turn up. On looking down the road he saw a packman slowly padding along; but in trying to accelerate the man's professional pace by a loud shout, he shook the hen-bird and she immediately repeated the attack on his other thigh. He was now fairly pinioned, and the pain scarcely bearable. At last the pedlar came up, but his horror was so great at poor Peter's predicament, that he only stared in blank dismay. "Toot, man, tak' ma knife oot o' ma pocket, and cut open this beast's claw." This was done with some difficulty. "Noo, gang roond on the ither side, an' ye'll fin' anither job." The man, who had no idea

that Peter was grappled on both sides, quickly obeyed, muttering, "Saw I ever sic sorrows o' birds in a' ma life!" Both eagles were brought safe home, but Peter assured me that he was unable to walk for many a day.

Another story of a prisoned eagle vindicating his dignity has so much of the comic about it that we forgive the savage revenge. A raw-boned Highlandman came to Robertson's house:—"Is your faither at hame?" "No," said one of his children. "Hasna he a tame aigle?" The little girl pointed out the place where it was confined. There was a hole cut at the bottom of the door, where its food was thrown in. Donald peered cautiously into the hole: quick as light, the eagle seized his nose, and it was only by a severe struggle, and by the cartilage giving way, that he effected his escape. When Peter came home, he found him sitting in a doleful plight; but having comforted him with a dram, and patched up his nose with sticking-plaster, he sent him away with his curiosity quite cured about eagles.[1]

[1] It will hardly be believed, but is nevertheless true, that when a male and a female eagle were confined in the same cage, the latter, always much the larger and more powerful bird, devoured its mate in a fit of hunger! The same unnatural cannibalism was seen by my son in the fox. At Minnesota he caught three cubs, keeping them in the same kennel. The strongest always drove away the others from the food-dish, and consequently soon grew to be a third larger than its companions. The man who looked after them forgot to bring their food for several days, and when my son went to the fox-house, expecting to find the poor creatures dead or dying, he descried the large one sitting comfortably on its tail, its sides distended to an

I mention one more to show the power of the bird when a mere nestling. Peter and two shepherds had gone to take an eaglet from the nest. The eyrie was a little way from the top of the cliff. Peter descended to it by a rope; one of the shepherds was a little above him; and the other, who had a very weak head, stipulated for a secure berth at the top. Peter passed the eaglet to the first man, who, in like manner, gave it safely to him at the top. But—he having most likely given it a nervous twitch—it seized him fiercely. Down he fell on his back, dread of toppling over into the abyss drowning all sense of pain. Up came the other shepherd; but when he saw the man moaning and helpless, he was seized with such an uncontrollable fit of laughter that he could give no assistance. When Peter reached the top, he drew man and eaglet upon firm ground, and then extricated the claw. As soon as he found himself upon level ground and free, he rushed at his jocose neighbour, and Peter had some difficulty in preventing a battle. It was a mortal affront to mention an eagle in this man's presence ever after.

But we have now got back to Peter's cottage. Loch Tulla lies glistering under a burning sun: I see the landlord at Inveroran curiously peeping round the corner, anxious to discover whether we had returned empty-handed. My appetite also warns me that it

enormous extent, and the remains of the other two beside him! The wretch was inflated by his own kith and kin.

is past nine; so, having appeased it by a subsoil of "halesome parritch," and a top-dressing of fresh eggs, "Now, landlord, out with the 'shan-dra-dam.'"[1]

My jolting drive to Cladich in my "chariot" was not over till towards two o'clock, but the keen air of the mountains had completely effaced the recollection of my solid breakfast. I therefore ordered a mutton-chop, and went to the shore to examine my craft. I had already bespoken the services of old Sandy M'Kenzie, "wha kens whar the big fish lie as weel as ony man on Loch Ow side." Sandy being appointed skipper, begged to be allowed to choose his own crew, which consisted of a stout, good-natured "callant" of about sixteen, yclept "Johnny,"—occasionally "Jock," when Sandy was in a patronising mood. Sandy was once a strong bony man, and piqued himself upon being one of the best wrestlers in the country. Now his eye is dim and filmy, much the colour of a boiled onion, and his athletic arm is paralytic and weak as a child's. I might have had far abler men at the oar, and as knowing about the haunts of the fish; but whenever I troll Loch Awe, none but that poor, ragged, woe-begone old man shall command my boat so long as he is able to do it.

Having satisfied myself that the cobbles were not

[1] The name given by a rural minister of the Kirk, who sported one of these vehicles, to a little spring-cart with a seat across for the "dames." The "minister's man" could never be persuaded to attempt this learned word, and would persist, in spite of him, to call it his "*chariot*," as the nearest Scripture authority he could master.

more leaky than they generally are, I returned to the inn. Monzie's keeper had been there to see my eagle, so I asked his leave to shoot a couple of ring-dotterels which were tippeting on a green bank close to the boats. This he at once civilly agreed to. All was now ready for the evening fishing. Johnny carried my trolling-rods; Sandy a "cogue-fu'" of live bait, and a little basket of provisions; and I my duck-gun, loaded with No. 6 for the dotterels. Poor little fellows! They looked so pretty that it was a shame to fire at them. But as I had no specimen in my collection, I could not resist the temptation of stringing both at a shot. One lay; but the other, being only wing-broken, ran into the water with so light and graceful a step, that it seemed as if walking on glass. The rods were soon baited, the evening was perfect for fishing, and the *feroxes* took well. We came over no large ones, however, and the three brought into the boat were only four, three, and two and a half pounds. We had intended to troll to the bay of old Castle Connal, eight miles down the loch, built, as Sandy says, by the Danes, but were obliged to defer it till next day. The bay which this castle commands is a famous resort of the largest size of the *ferox*. When we fish it, Sandy always tells a story of one of the Lochiels, who had been taken captive by a hostile clan, and confined there. His jailer had an annuity during his lifetime. The Camerons, however, found out where he was concealed, and came down in a body.

As soon as the wretch saw them, he stabbed him with his penknife, having no other weapon at hand, expecting a reward for his atrocity—which, no doubt, he received.

Night overtook us before we could gain the harbour of Cladich, *alias* the Burn-foot, which is the only safe anchorage in case of a storm. And, indeed, it is very difficult to bring up a boat anywhere else, the coast being so shallow. The entrance to this burn is so intricate, that a man rowing in and out every day may be completely puzzled after dark. "Johnny," by some hieroglyphic shadowy marks of the trees upon the water, known only to himself, at last piloted us safely through, and was "Jock, my man," till we got to the inn.

The old dun eight-day clock had just "chapped" seven, when my gallant crew cleared out of harbour, and, with my rods, bait, provisions, and pea-jacket, were making for Port Sonachan quay, where I had directed them to meet me. The morning was colder, the wind had changed from west to east—"a bad airt" for the fish. There were certain appearances also in the sky which foreboded squally weather. The best of the fishing-ground is below Port Sonachan, so I did not wish to waste time, on such an unpropitious day, until we got there. I sauntered dreamily along, admiring the views as they unfolded themselves, and had sat for some time on Port Sonachan shore, listening to a chorus of cuckoos, before the measured stroke

of Sandy and Johnny appeared at some distance, slowly propelling their clumsy boat. I question if I gained much time by my manœuvre, though Sandy appeared quite satisfied with the rate of their progress. I was soon seated in the stern, with lovely baits towing behind. "No a rug," as Sandy repeatedly said; but he endeavoured, poor fellow, to keep up our spirits by telling a tale of every wood, hill, or rock we crept slowly past. "There's the badger's rock, sir; he has never left it for the last fifty year." The grey hermit of the rock called me back to my boyish days. The "brock-holes" in the oak wood — the traps my brothers and I had purloined from the old keeper, who preferred killing vermin by the lazy method of the gun—my delight when I detected the first poor captured badger,—all rose fresh before me, as in those sunny mornings of life's early spring. My brothers and I had been brought up in the country, and were hunters from our childhood. Our couple of terriers were game as flint, and yet they were never able to draw a badger from his natural fastness. I have heard them hold one to bay for hours, in the inmost recesses of his earth. On one occasion, when a favourite terrier had teased the poor animal for a long time, it slyly followed, and when the dog was within a yard of the hole's entrance, bit his hind leg to the bone. This harassing of the rear of a retreating enemy showed tactics on the part of the old grey friar that we could scarcely have expected. I once brought

home a half-grown cub which had wandered from the hole, rolling it up in my jacket. (What will boys not do?) It soon became so tame as to eat beetles and humble-bees from our hands, and would lap up porridge and milk like a dog. I well recollect—for it was a job that cost us no small trouble—digging out an old she-one. To the last she kept the dogs at bay; and even when we heard the growl within a couple of yards, they were unable to dislodge her. Whenever we struck into the wide cell, they dashed in upon her, and inflicted such injury that she soon died. There were two cubs about a week old, which made a low, chirping squeak. The cell where they were was round, hard, and dry, about two feet in height, by four or five yards in circumference. There was no food in it. Many a badger we trapped, and, I verily believe, were as proud of the brock-holes as an Indian chief of his finest hunting-ground. Those that we trapped soon learned to take part of the dog's supper. We never saw them eat grass or hay, and should as soon have thought of giving such food to a dog as of insulting them with it. What they call "badger's hay-making" is neither more nor less than the rooting up of the moss, which they are obliged to do to get at beetles, grubs, &c., among its roots. This dries, and the badger brings home a little for its winter bed. We used to notice as much of this hay made as would suffice for a good-sized stack, and more than would fill up every badger's hole in the country.

I need scarcely say that what they carried was never missed.

My reveries were now broken by Sandy pointing out the nest of the "salmon-tailed gled," and there are the owners wheeling their graceful circles. Two roes were also looking at us from the shore, and another a little further on. They seemed not the least afraid, as we pulled slowly past. I was admiring the beautiful hanging wood, in which the kite's nest held a prominent place near the top of one of the finest old oaks, when a pull, that bent my rod's top to the water, and spun round my large wooden pirn, brought me to my legs at a spring. To seize the rod and place the butt above my knee, with a good bend at the top, was the work of an instant. Sandy was also active: he gave both oars to Johnny, and began, with his shaky hands, to wind up the other rod out of the way, in case of a collision. I told him always to do so when I hooked a trout. At this moment the gorgeous fish sprang a yard out of the water, coming down with a splash that made the rocks echo. Sandy, at no time very expert, became quite nervous at sight of the monster, and bungled his work sadly. I gave him a push out of my way, and in so doing knocked off his tattered hat into the water at the bottom of the cobble. He only smiled, without a vestige of anger. I saw his thin grey hair, and am happy to recollect that at that exciting moment, ashamed of my impatience, I picked up his hat with

my left hand, and placed it on his head, poor Sandy all the time begging me "never to heed it." Sandy's whole heart was in the capture of the fish. His rod was by this time wound up, he was again at the oar, and I had fair play. The *ferox* bored like a harpooned whale; sometimes he would change his course, and go down to the bottom, taking forty yards of line, which he made swirl through the water with a humming noise, like a low sound of the telegraph wires. When I shook him up, he would fight away for the middle of the loch. At length he grew weaker, and I got him under command of a short line. It was a beautiful sight—that noble fish, sometimes showing his glancing scales for a moment, and then trying to bore under the boat, and always foiled by the boatmen, who promptly obeyed my slightest signal. He now began really to fail, and I felt I could lead him; so, directing Sandy to a shingly part of the shore, where there were no rocks, I determined to land him there. The beach was very shallow; and, in spite of my remonstrances, Sandy walked up to his knees in water, and drew the cobble ashore. I was now on *terra firma*, but my fish was by no means done up yet. Every time that I brought him to the shallow, he dashed away with as much vigour as before. This could not last; and the bursts became shorter and slower, till my victim was unable to get down at all, and only struggled on the top of the water. I had ample opportunity to admire his dimensions, colour,

and shape, and was determined that no rashness or eagerness to obtain it should rob me of so rich a prize. At last he turned upon his broad and gleaming side. Now was my time. And like a wrecked and gallant vessel he lay stranded on the beach!

A proud man was Sandy M'Kenzie then. He took entire possession of the fish, and would hardly let Johnny look at it; if he ventured to touch it, he met a stern rebuke. Well did Sandy know how rare it was to come across a trout of that size in Loch Awe nowadays, and all the fishing guides there are as proud of their gentlemen's performances as if they were their own. They reckon their honour concerned, and banter each other about the failure of their employers as reflecting upon their own want of knowledge of the haunts of the fish.

We now sat down upon a green bank, close to the Gled's Nest wood, and had out our little basket of refreshments. I gave Sandy a plentiful supply for both. "Now, Sandy, eat your fill, and give Johnny the leavings." This is a favourite joke with Sandy, and Johnny is obliged to shield himself from its point by chuckling as heartily as he can. The Glenlivet was soon uncorked; and when I was taking my modicum, mixed with the clear water of the spring, I overheard Johnny complaining of the scarcity of the "sma' stells which were ance thick eneuch on Loch Ow," and reprobating the tyranny of our rulers, "wha hinnered folk frae doin' what they liket best theirsels

wi' their ain pickle barley." Sandy likes his whisky raw, but is "*very fond o' a drap water after't!*" The first time I gave him a glass into his paralytic hand, he spilt about two-thirds. I now insist upon holding the glass to his mouth myself. This indignity Sandy resisted at first, but I was peremptory, and he now contrives to keep me between him and Johnny, who is slyly keeking round. When he has got his glass, however, he seems to think it a good job well over, and occasionally attempts some wit. I never like to see his sorrowful face then, or even to hear his joke; it seems as if uttered in bitterness of heart. I could not resist having a peep into the kite's nest. She had no eggs yet, but all was ready for them, plenty of soft warm odds-and-ends for the lining. The two birds, balancing themselves at a great height above, kept strict watch over our movements. It is a great pity that the kite has become so rare, for it always gives a sort of finishing touch to our pine-clothed hills.

The breeze had freshened. The squalls had settled into a steady gale, and we were fully seven miles from Cladich. I wished, at least, to try some of the best ground on our way home, having little hope of pulling the whole distance against such a head-wind. Sandy, however, was unable to make any way; and upon Johnny's complaining that the boat was drifting back, fairly gave in. I had always relieved the old man when we had to cross the loch, or go quickly

past bad fishing-ground, upon which occasions I used to hear Johnny taunting him. When I took the oar, Sandy always had his revenge by, "You've met your match noo, lad." Since it was impossible to fish any of the way back, I dried my lines along the shore, and determined to enjoy the lonely walk to the inn. The road for some miles was a steep mountain-track, which seemed only fitted for a flock of goats. On some parts of this dismal region the sun seldom shines, and on others scarce a ray penetrates all the winter. The whole hill was studded with ragged rocks and stones, and a more dreary path could hardly be imagined: gloomy without grandeur. Slowly we plodded to accommodate old Sandy, whose short breath effectually stopped his wild legends.

We had nearly gained the summit, from which there is a charming view of the loch, when Johnny, who had sauntered on a few paces before, stopped suddenly, and pointing to a little bing of stones—"This is the Tinkler's Cairn." "'Deed, no," says Sandy, with an air of superior knowledge; "I'll show the Tinkler's Cairn." And stumping on a few paces further, "This is the very bit where the tinkler was murdered." I felt a thrill of horror. A more appropriate place for a deed of blood could not have been chosen; it looked like haunted ground, so bleak and bare and lonely, with its stern rocks of perpetual gloom. After carefully examining the little

cairn of stones, which is always reared over the spot where a dead body is found upon the mountains, I asked Sandy to relate the story, the substance of which is as follows: A tinker and his termagant wife had long travelled the country. He was much older than his wife, who was a woman of immense muscular power, and nearly six feet high. "The puir body," said Sandy, "had little peace wi' her. A perfect she-deevil was Kirsty; I kent her weel. Mony a day after the deed was done she travelled the country, and her sons are to the fore yet." One day the tinker and his wife left Cladich, and took their course over this mountain. From what motive is not known, but when they came to this spot, she seized a stone, murdered her wretched husband, then coolly walked on to the next shieling, where she slept, and in the morning pursued her way through the hills. A shepherd soon after discovered the poor tinker, lying stark and gory upon his cold hard bed. The woman was taken up, but was dismissed for want of evidence. Life was held light in the Highlands in those days, and soon little was said or thought about the poor lost tinker or his tyrant mate.

I felt relieved to quit this dismal scene, and to descend the more sunny side of the hill. We were now threading the waving woods of Sonachan and Rock Hill, where the blithe mavis was pouring its evening melody from the topmost bough of many a

tall pine or shadowy beech. I took the opportunity of explaining to Johnny that the large "stells" paid a deal o' money to Government, which they could not do if the little ones were allowed to compete and pay nothing; that Government paid an army with this money to keep the French from coming over, and taking him where he would never see a glass of whisky more: that if he objected to pay soldiers in this way, he must e'en go and be a "soger" himself for nothing, to prevent the aforesaid French inroad. This last piece of logic evidently had some effect; and I question if Johnny will long for the strong waters of "Loch Ow" the next time he is so fortunate as to be presented with a glass from the large "stells" of Glenlivet or Glen Islay.

Arrived at Cladich, my first step was to order in the steelyard, when my fish proved 15½ lb. odd, so must have been nearly seventeen when taken out of the water. I had killed in Loch Vennachar, the year before, with single gut, a clean salmon which weighed 17 lb. when brought home. This salmon did not make nearly so fierce a run as the Loch Awe trout with gimp. I have heard gentlemen speak slightingly of the best trout when compared with salmon; but let them have one of these Loch Awe monsters on their hooks, in as good condition as mine was, and I venture to say they will not complain of the want of mettle in the trout. I have no doubt that the *Salmo ferox* is superior, both in strength and spirit, to the *Salmo*

salar. Unless the *ferox* is in first-rate condition, his head is very ugly, and looks much too large for his body. This was not the case with the specimen I have just described; his head is smaller, and his shoulder more round than any I have ever taken; on which account I had him preserved by Fenton[1] in George Street, Edinburgh.

I took the road at five next morning, to be in time for the Inverary steamboat, which left at seven; but even at that early hour, poor Sandy, with his fragment of a hat in his hand, was waiting at the "brae-fit" to wish me a "gude journey." Having shaken him heartily by the hand, I turned my back, for a time, upon these cherished scenes of beauty, grandeur, and romance.

[1] Tommy Fenton emigrated to America some time ago. He was the best artist in his trade I ever saw. Having studied the creatures in their native hills, he was unrivalled at positions.

HAWKING.

As I think it not altogether becoming in us moderns to forget the days of yore, allow me now a word or two about the recreations of our fathers, when they sallied forth, falcon on wrist, with a gallant troop of retainers.

The aristocratic sport of falconry, though now superseded by our deadly guns, has in it something so exhilarating and so gay, that any one who has witnessed it, on ever so small a scale, cannot wonder that it was once the pastime of the high and mighty of the land.

There are several kinds of falcons and hawks found in Scotland, all of which are capable of being trained; but the former are greatly superior, and always preferred. The largest is the goshawk,[1] the young males of which are called falcon-gentils, and were once thought a distinct species. Next in size is the

[1] The goshawk is short-winged, and not properly a falcon.

gerfalcon, rather less than the gentil. These are rare in Scotland, although they occasionally build in some parts, particularly in the northern islands. All of them can knock down a heron and the largest game, including hares; but the most esteemed and active on wing is the gerfalcon, distinguished above the rest for its ferocity. Of the smaller kinds there is the peregrine, which yearly builds in many of our secluded glens and remote precipices. It is of this species that I have most to say. An old black-cock or pheasant is too strong for them, but they are able to bring down grouse or young black-game. Of the hawk tribe there is the hen-harrier, the male of which is blue, and the female, called the ring-tail, brown—the hobby,[1] the sparrow-hawk, and the kestrel; the last mentioned very numerous in some of the islands of Loch Lomond. Nor must I omit the smallest of the tribe, the merlin, not much larger than a thrush, inferior to none in boldness and activity. We have occasionally shot it in Dumbartonshire, and admired the elegance of its diminutive form, which seemed, according to its small proportions, a model of agility and strength.

As none of these hawks, when trained, are worth much for game, one would think their depredations could not be very formidable; but, on the contrary,

[1] The hobby and merlin are entitled to be called falcons. They are long-winged, and have all the attributes of courage and speed. The former is only a summer visitant to the south of England; the latter is resident, and hatches yearly on our moors.

when at large, and allowed their full sweep of hill and dale, they do great mischief. I once put up a flock of teal which flew out upon the loch; a sparrow-hawk pursued, struck one scarcely a foot from the surface, and, though hardly able to bear its burden, flew with it a considerable way to the shore. I marked the place, and recovered the teal, with half of its head eaten, but otherwise uninjured. One summer, a wild duck reared its young brood in a bay of Loch Lomond. They were reduced to a few by a small hawk. My brother saw it pick up one as neatly as possible; and another day the old duck was seen flapping its wings on the surface of the water, and endeavouring to drive off the hawk. The ducklings had all dived, but the first that popped up its head was instantly seized and carried off. The best powers, however, of these little poachers being only exerted on their own behalf, and the nests of the larger falcons being seldom found, the main stay of the falconer is the peregrine.

There was a gamekeeper in Dumbartonshire, who, when a boy, had received some lessons from the late John Anderson, of hawking memory, and, having also a natural turn that way, possessed as good a knowledge of the art as any one of his day. In a steep crag at the head of Glen Douglas, a pair of peregrines built every year. The young were always taken by this man to be trained, and the old ones were never molested. With great trouble and pains, the young

falcons may be fit for flying the first season; and I shall now describe a day's hawking with this keeper, which is a very novel spectacle to any one who has not seen it before, and is always, like coursing, most enjoyed by those ignorant of field-sports.

Early one morning, about the beginning of October, the keeper was on the stubble-field with a couple of peregrines on his wrist, and followed by his son, a young lad, with a third bird, and a brace of old steady dogs. The hawks were all hooded, and with bells at their feet; the ground was hunted with great caution, and soon the dogs came to a point. The keeper immediately took off the hood from one of the hawks, and threw it into the air. The bird kept flying round in circles, the bells jingling at its feet. The keeper then advanced rapidly towards the dog, and a covey of partridges rose; the hawk instantly swooped down, and for many hundred yards there was a race, the partridges doing their utmost to outstrip the hawk, and the hawk making every exertion to overtake the partridges. At last he began to gain upon them, and when he drew near, made a sudden dash at one, which he seized in his claws, and flew to the ground. The keeper now walked up and secured the falcon, the partridge not being in any way torn or spoilt. Several points were afterwards got, and three more partridges killed. Sometimes the partridges escaped, especially if they rose at a distance; and latterly, when the hawks became tired, they were no longer

able to overtake them. When the hawk did not kill the bird, there was more difficulty in recovering it; but the keeper said he never lost one. He had a lure, which was a small board, about a foot long and half a foot broad, with some red cloth nailed upon it, on which he usually fed them; he threw this lure into the air, hallooing at the same time, and the falcons coming to it, were secured and hooded. When flown at snipe, the most beautiful aerial evolutions may often be seen, each bird endeavouring to out-soar the other, until both are nearly lost in the clouds; but a woodcock, if the ground is clear, makes the best sport of all.

The gamekeeper at Rossdhu harried this same peregrine's nest in 1840, and trained them for a different but very useful purpose. He flew them at carrion-crows, magpies, &c., which they drove into trees, and prevented from leaving until he advanced with his gun and shot them.

So much time and trouble, however, are required both in keeping and in training hawks, that it is most likely the days of falconry are for ever gone by.

When shooting along the Gareloch coverts in 1837, I cut down a cock, which a peregrine stooped down instantly to pick up. It had almost got the benefit of my second barrel, when the bell tinkled, and I knew it was one of Barr's stray falcons. As the woodcock fell into thick gorse, my retriever's nose proved keener than the peregrine's eyes, so it was foiled in the attempt to carry off my bird.

ON EAGLES.

FEW sportsmen who have been much in the wilds of Scotland have not occasionally seen an eagle; but except at the hatching season, it is extremely difficult to get a shot at one. Even then it is no easy task, for the nest is often in the face of some precipice very difficult to scale.

The golden eagle is not nearly so great a foe to the farmer as to the sportsman; for although a pair, having young ones, will occasionally pounce upon an unprotected flock, and continue their depredations until scared away, their more usual prey consists of hares, rabbits, and grouse—a fact sufficiently proved by the feathers and bones found in their eyries. A pair used to build every year in Balquhidder, another in Glen Ogle, and a third in Glen Artney. The shepherds seldom molested the old ones; but by means of ladders, at considerable risk, took the young and sold them. One of these, brought to Callander in 1838, when scarcely full-

fledged, would seize a live cat thrown to it for food, and bearing it away with the greatest ease, tear it to pieces, the cat unable to offer any resistance, and uttering the most horrid yells.

I recollect, when a boy, an eyrie in Glen Luss, where a pair hatched yearly; but since the female was shot, no others have frequented the place. The shooting of this eagle was a service of great danger, and the man who undertook it a most hardy and determined fellow. The cliff was nearly perpendicular, and the only way of access was over the top, where a single false step would have sent him headlong into the gulf below. After creeping down a considerable way, he saw the eagle sitting on her eggs, a long shot off; but his gun was loaded with swan-shot, so, taking a deliberate aim, he fired; she gave one shrill scream, extended her wings, and died on her nest. His greatest difficulty now was, how to avail himself of his success. He was not, however, the man to be balked; so, at the most imminent risk, he managed to get to the eyrie, tumbled the eagle over the cliff, and pocketed the two eggs. They were set under a hen, but did not hatch.

When two eagles are in pursuit of a hare, they show great tact—it is exactly as if two well-matched greyhounds were turning a hare—as one rises the other descends, until poor puss is tired out: when one of them succeeds in catching her, it fixes a claw in her back, and holds by the ground with the other,

striking all the time with its beak. I have several times seen eagles coursed in the same way by carrion-crows and ravens, whose territories they had invaded: the eagle generally seems to have enough to do in keeping clear of his sable foes, and every now and then gives a loud whistle or scream. If the eagle is at all alarmed when in pursuit of his prey, he instantly bears it off alive. Where alpine hares are plentiful, it is no unfrequent occurrence, when the sportsman starts one, for an eagle to swoop down and carry it off, struggling, with the greatest ease; in this case, he always allows the hare to run a long way out of shot before he strikes, and is apt to miss altogether. When no enemy is near, he generally adopts the more sure way of tiring out his game.

The method of the golden eagle in destroying red-deer calves is exactly akin to the *reflection* of the royston and carrion-crows, when breaking the shells of mussels. After pouncing upon the deer calf, and finding the impossibility of bearing it away to a distance, the eagle makes as short work as possible by climbing to a great height in the air, when its victim is dropped, and killed by a dash against the rocky ground. Instantly descending, it feeds voraciously, and never leaves off until either completely gorged or driven away. Next day it is pretty certain, about the dawn, to return for the remainder.

I once witnessed a touching instance of the attachment of an eagle to her young, which, like the child

of some bloodthirsty chief, alone had the power to touch the single chord of tenderness and love in the heart of its cruel parent. I had wounded her mortally as she flew from her eyrie, quite unconscious of her having hatched an eaglet. Next day she returned to the foot of the rock, although not able to reach her nest—the feelings of a mother being stronger in her savage breast than either the sense of present pain or the dread of further danger.

There is often only one egg in the nest, but when there are two, one is frequently addled. It is a curious fact that, in the year 1847, when there was a dreadful hurricane about the end of April, no eggs were laid in either the sea or golden eagles' eyries of the Black Mount forest.

The enormous nests of the golden and sea eagles are pretty much alike; the outer rim being composed of thick boughs, and the whole not unlike the shape of a large-sized round table. The golden eagle always has its eyrie among rocks, while the erne chooses an old tree for inland incubation. On the bold rocky coast, where suitable trees are scarce, it follows the example of the mountaineer, and generally builds in the cliffs.

The colour of the golden eagle differs very much; some are so dark as almost to justify the name of "the black eagle," which they are often called in the Highlands; in others the golden tint is very bright; and many, even, are of a muddy brown. I do not think that the age of the bird has anything to do

with this, as I have seen the colour in young and old equally variable. The sure mark of a young one is the degree of white on the tail: the first year the upper half is pure, which gradually becomes less so by streaks of brown; about the third or fourth year no white is to be seen.

THE SEA-EAGLE.

The sea-eagle is rather larger than the golden, and of a lighter brown. The bill, which is longer and broader, but not so hooked as in the other, is of a dull yellowish white. The whole of the tail-feathers of the young ones are brown, when they gradually change to white, which is complete about the fourth year—the very reverse of the golden eagle. The tail is also shorter, and the legs are not feathered to the toes, like the other; but quite enough to show that the bird was not intended to subsist by fishing, like the osprey, whose legs are bare to the thighs, which have only a thin covering of short feathers.

As this bird does not complete its mature plumage till the fourth season, there was much confusion regarding it even among scientific naturalists—some making out two, and others three distinct species. It has also been confounded with the bald eagle of America, to which it bears a close resemblance when both are young—that is, before the American is dignified with

a grey head, and the erne with a white train. These mistakes have been long ago cleared up, and the bird distinctly traced through all its maturing stages.

The habits of the sea-eagle differ materially from those of the golden. While the latter has its sole and grand resort in the Scottish mountains, the former has a very discursive range. It is a constant winter visitant to the Lowlands, and even as far as the south of England. I lately saw a young one shot on the banks of the Thames, and preserved by a bird-stuffer in Henley.

In the islands and wilder sea-coasts of Scotland, the erne may be met with the whole year, and is much less rare than the national bird. It is also more shy, which may perhaps be accounted for by its oftener coming in contact with man, its most hated foe.

A cursory glance will show how much more vulture-shaped both the bill and body of the sea-eagle are than those of the mountain one. She also partakes of the *nature* of the vulture, in having a less dainty palate than the golden eagle, and, being not near so quick a game-destroyer, is more apt to devour what she does not strike down. Even carrion does not come amiss, especially in winter. Young sea-fowl and flappers are a favourite summer food; and when she builds inland, no more frequent prey is found in her eyrie than a young wild-duck before it is able to fly. We can thus trace her partiality for the moor-lochan or the sea-coast when choosing a

The Osprey.

habitation for her young: it is that she may feed them with the flappers and wild-fowl nestlings so plentifully scattered around, and so easily secured. When this supply fails, she is often fain to content herself with carcasses left upon the inland swamp, or cast up by the tide on the sea-shore. Most likely to prey upon *them* is the great motive for her winter wanderings when food grows scarce in the wilds.

THE OSPREY.

The osprey, or water-eagle, frequents many of the Highland lochs: a pair had their eyrie for many years on the top of an old castle on a small island in Loch Lomond. I am sorry to say I was the means of their leaving that ruin, which they had occupied for generations.

I have told in a previous chapter how, when a very young sportsman, in company with a gamekeeper, I shot the female and trapped the male of the ospreys that were wont to build on the old Castle of Galbraith. They were a beautiful pair—the female, as in most birds of prey, being considerably the larger: the frontispiece is a most correct likeness. The eggs of these ospreys had been regularly taken every year, and yet they never forsook their eyrie. It was a beautiful sight to see them sail into our bay on a calm summer night, and, after flying round it several times,

strike down upon a good-sized pike, and bear it away as if it had been a minnow.

I have been told, but cannot vouch for the truth of it, that they have another method of taking their prey in warm weather, when fish bask near the shore. They fix one claw in a weed or bush, and strike the other into the fish; but I never saw them attempt any other mode of "leistering" than that I have mentioned. When they see a fish, they immediately settle in the air—lower their flight, and settle again—then shoot down like a dart. They always seize prey with their claws, the outer toes of which turn round a considerable way, which gives them a larger and firmer grasp. Owls have also this power, to enable them with greater certainty to secure their almost equally agile victims; while the fern-owl has the toe turned round like a parrot, to assist it in the difficult task of catching insects in the air. But if this were the case with the others, although it might be an advantage in the first instance, it would very considerably weaken their hold when prey was struck.

I remember seeing another pair of ospreys on Loch Menteith that had their eyrie on the gnarled branch of an old tree. They became so accustomed to the man who let out boats there that the female never even left her nest when he landed on the island, unless a stranger was with him. Once, when he returned home after a short absence, he saw one of them sitting on the tree, making a kind of wailing cry: suspect-

ing all was not right, he rowed to the island, and found that the female was missing, and the nest harried. They have never hatched there since: the male has been frequently seen, but he has never found another mate. When they had young, they did not confine their depredations to Loch Menteith, but used to go in quest of prey to the other lochs in the neighbourhood; and, in the evening, would fly down the glen, carrying a fish a foot long in their claws. The ospreys which yearly hatched on Loch-an-Eilan, on the Rothiemurchus estate, have also been wantonly destroyed within the last few years.

The nest of the osprey is lined with coarse water-plants and grasses: the outside fenced with thick sticks, some of them four inches round, and three feet and a half long—proof enough of the strength of its legs and wings. The eggs are as large as a hen's, with reddish-brown spots. The osprey is about the size of the herring-gull; the breast nearly white, spotted with brown; back and wings dull brown; the thighs very muscular; legs and claws, which are of a bluish flesh-colour, equally so.

THE KITE.

ALTHOUGH formerly abounding in the mountainous regions of Scotland, the kite, like the osprey, is in a fair way of being extirpated. Once it was frequently met with in the Lowlands, and it is common in Wales. To look at the elegance of its form and the grace of its movements, the keenness of its eye, the strength of its wings, and the aptitude of its claws for seizing prey, one would suppose the kite to be a very mischievous bird; but none of the hawk tribe is less so: even the buzzard, albeit no great adept, is much its superior in the art of destruction. The kite has no quickness of flight, yet is admirably fitted for his mode of life. Subsisting in a great measure on carrion and reptiles, his keen eye and unwearied wing are of the greatest service in discovering his food. Fish, when he can get it, he considers a dainty morsel, and he may be most successfully trapped with this bait. I found out his weak point

by noticing the avidity with which he would devour the refuse of the net the day after a draught. I have watched him, with delight, sailing aloft with such perfect ease that the only perceptible motion was that of his tail, piloting him like a helm in his aerial circles—scrutinising, with his telescopic eye, every field and valley where he might hope to find a prey; and then, suddenly lowering his flight and lessening his circles, gradually alight upon some object, so small that it seemed scarcely possible he could have seen it from such a height.

Indeed, were the sight of the falcons and hawks equal to that of the kite, their havoc upon our moors would be much greater than it now is; but their manner of seeking food is quite a contrast to his. In beating the ground for prey, they, especially the latter, seldom rise higher than twenty yards; but, when once it is sprung, their activity in pursuit is unrivalled. I once, but only once, saw a peregrine beat game out of the heather, and destroy it on the ground: many, I know, suppose it never strikes but on wing. When out breaking a young dog upon the Perthshire moors, I put up a grouse, which, after flying some distance, was pursued by a blue falcon. The poor grouse, seeing it had no chance, dropped down in the heather; but it was too late, the hawk was directly above. It immediately alighted, searched the heather for a minute, and presently the grouse fluttered out before it. I saw the chase for about ten

yards, when they ran behind a hillock; and on my going up to the place, the falcon rose, and there lay the grouse decapitated.

But, to return to the kite—he is the shyest of birds; not even at the time of incubation can you often get a shot at him. I have frequently found the nests: they are much like the carrion-crow's, only larger and more impervious. They are lined with whatever the birds can pick up—such as old stockings, worsted gloves, wool, or indeed anything soft and warm. There are seldom more than three eggs, often only a couple. Kites generally build in the pine-forests on the hills, and select a tree with a thin bare stem, often very difficult to climb. I once concealed myself at the foot of a tree where a kite was sitting, in order to shoot it on its return to the nest—for they generally fly off at the most distant approach of an enemy. I was perfectly hid; and, after waiting nearly an hour, had an opportunity of witnessing the tact and cunning of the bird. The sun was shining warm upon the nest, or it would, most likely, not have kept me so long; at last I saw it flying round in very wide circles, which gradually narrowed: it then lighted upon a distant tree, and peering round in every direction, chose a nearer; and so on, until it came within three or four trees of the nest. It was now within shot; but I had unfortunately so placed myself as only to command the nest-tree, never doubting that it would light on this before it settled upon the nest. But I was out in my

reckoning; as soon as it had tolerably reassured itself, it rose perpendicularly in the air, and came down upon its nest like a stone. The manner in which I was concealed prevented my getting a flying shot; so nothing remained but to fire through the nest, which proved a sufficient defence, as the kite flew away, and never returned. A few days after, I climbed the tree with some difficulty, and took two eggs, about the size of a hen's, with dusky-red spots.

In my roamings through the Highlands and Islands last spring and autumn (1879), it gave me great pleasure to find that the nobler birds of prey, having been for some years carefully protected, were steadily on the increase. There were five eyries of the golden eagle on the Inchnadamph range in Sutherland—one with two eaglets in a cliff of Quinag in sight of the hotel windows. In general, eagles have only one young bird to rear, occasionally two, but never three, for if a third egg is laid, it is never hatched.

Last spring the ospreys returned to Loch-an-Eilan, and Sir John Grant of Rothiemurchus having removed the boat, setting a watch, the young birds left the nest safely, fully fledged.

Another pair of ospreys hatched and reared their nestlings in Ault Cam on the slopes of Ben Aulder. Till the young had flown, their nest was kept a secret.

Peregrines are now often protected, as well as

kites and buzzards, by true sportsmen. My favourite brown owl, once so persecuted, has multiplied greatly on Loch Lomond side; and on a spring or autumn night, five or six may be heard answering each other from the opposite banks of the upper end of the loch.

The larger, more interesting beasts of prey seem to have been excluded from what game-butchers call the "preservation of *vermin*." It does not appear that even in the roughest mountain recesses the wild-cat or marten number more than they have done for many years. These animals, however, being shyer at all times than birds, and naturally more hidling in their habits, from not having the help of wings to aid their escape, it is not so easy to count their statistics.

OWLS.

THE "hoolet" is generally regarded by the common people with a sort of superstitious awe; and, indeed, there is that in its nature and habits which is apt to call forth feelings of pleasure or aversion, according to the temper and circumstances of the observer. For my own part, I have always regarded these secluded birds with peculiar favour, whether watching them flitting past in the twilight, with silky spectre-like flight, or reverently listening after nightfall to their melancholy, oft-repeated cry. Even the harsh screech of the white owl is not without its charm; it appears to belong to the stillness of the night.

There are four species of owls which are emphatically British. For although the snowy owl has been occasionally seen and shot in the Shetland Isles, and the great eagle owl is sometimes met with in the hilly districts of the north of England, yet they are so rare as scarcely to deserve the name of British

birds. At all events, I know nothing of them except from report, and make it my rule never to run the risk of misleading by borrowed information. The little owl,[1] I have been told, occasionally builds near Oxford, but this Lilliputian is quite as scarce as his Brobdingnagian kin. By our British owls, then, I mean the tawny or ivy owl, the white or barn owl, the long-eared and short-eared owls.

Ever since the old tower of my ancestors has been in ruins, a pair of tawny owls have made their habitation there. When a boy, I never failed to search out their nest, and sometimes tamed one of the young, which was pretty sure to be decoyed away by the parents as soon as it was able to fly. I often saw both father and mother come to their young one in the dusk, sometimes with food in their talons. These young owls were not at all particular what they ate, and devoured greedily raw meat of any kind, as well as fish; but I never saw them drink, and when offered water, they showed as much dislike to it as a cat. All day the young owl sat moping, with closed eyes, hissing and snapping his bill if disturbed; but about nightfall his visage became full and staring, and so quick was his sight, that I have only been made aware, by the animation of his solemn face, that the indistinct shadow, barely perceptible, was one of the old ones.

[1] A gardener at Roslin assured me lately that the little owl breeds there every spring, but I should like to have better proof of the fact.

A pair of white owls were equally constant to a small cave among the precipitous rocks of Inch Tavannach, the most picturesque of the thirty-three islands on Loch Lomond. I have often climbed to this nest—by no means an easy task—to watch the growth of the young. There were sometimes four or five, whereas the brown owl had seldom more than two or three. Every fine evening the industrious white owl was to be seen skirting with noiseless wing the lawns and fields about Rossdhu, though nearly a mile from the island. I have often admired its expertness. Whenever it saw or heard a mouse, it settled in the air, like the osprey, and then, with its legs hanging down, ready to seize the moment it came to the ground, appeared to alight rapidly on its prey. The ways of the brown owl are different. It does not appear to hunt on the wing, but, perched on the top of the highest tree, hears the slightest rustling among the grass, and instantly descends upon its prey. The grotesquely large head of this bird, which also implies large eyes and ears, are no doubt wise provisions to enable it to see and hear acutely in the darkness from such a height. An instance of the very quick ear of the buzzard once came under my own notice, and is probably still more remarkable in the owl. This buzzard, scarcely full fledged, was standing, erect as a drill-sergeant, in the midst of a noisy group, all distracting his attention, when a field-mouse was let out of a trap among the grass behind him. He

listened, wheeled to the right about, instantly detected the little fugitive, and fastened his claw in its back.

When the hen bird was sitting upon her eggs, the male did not take up his quarters so near, for I have frequently seen him in the dusk fly across the bay from the opposite oak wood, and settle upon an aged plane-tree, uttering a low tremulous hoot. This was immediately answered by a sharp scream from his mate, who then left her nest and joined him on the tree.

Owls hoot all the year, except in the dead of winter; and even then, should the weather be calm and clear, they continue to mourn through the darkness of the night. During the severe winter of 1831, a fine old fellow, the very Tamburini of owls, haunted a clump of beeches, and, from one of the bare gnarled branches, I seldom missed hearing his fine tenor voice when I returned late from shooting. It struck me that he would make a first-rate specimen for my collection. As I passed one night with my duck-gun, I heard him in all his glory; so, creeping under the clump, I at last ascertained from which tree the sound proceeded; but to catch sight of the owl seemed impossible. Although he continued his cry at proper intervals, I strained my eyes for ten minutes, until I perceived, upon the very topmost branch, a little knob. I was slowly raising my gun, on the chance of this being my object, when it glided off, plainly showing that I was far more visible to him than he

to me. He immediately settled upon another tree, and began to hoot. I was, however, more successful this time, for, upon getting under the tree, I detected him, perched as before, near the top. Taking very deliberate aim, I fired, and the poor owl fell half-way down the tree; but, being only wounded, he managed to seize a twig with his claws. I threw a few stones to dislodge him, but as he was not hit in the wings, he flew a little way and dropped. The night was so dark that I could not find him; but next morning I went to the spot, and hearing a great clamour of jays and other birds, I guessed what was the matter, and soon detected my victim lying, persecuted and insulted, at the foot of his tree. He was of course, at that season, in the finest feather; his back red-brown, like an autumn leaf.

If there is no ruin near, these owls will rear their young in a thick ivy-tree, or take possession of a magpie's nest, provided it is in some dark old fir-tree or cedar. They never construct one for themselves, but lay their eggs in a hole of the wall in ruins or outbuildings, only scraping a little sand or lime upon the stones. I have twice known the tawny owl hatch in the nest of a magpie, but never in any other bird's. The reason probably is, that the nests of crows, rooks, hawks, &c., are all roofless. Once or twice in summer I have heard the tawny owl hoot in the daytime, but they never continue to do so above two or three times. It has then a most un-

natural sound, and is, of course, not nearly so audible or imposing as during the stillness of night. I recollect once, when standing under a tree where an owl was hooting, being struck with the difference of the note from its sound at a distance. Far off, one wonders that so small a bird can emit such a volume of sound. The nearer you come, however, the less the sound appears; but what it loses in strength it gains in clearness and melody, which, I suppose, is the reason we hear it at such a distance. I have noticed this also in the sounds of other night-birds,[1] especially the nightingale's song, and the chur of the fern-owl, or night-jar. This last interesting compound of the swallow, the cuckoo, and the owl, is one of our latest spring arrivals. Its food consists of the larger night-insects; therefore, unless perched upon a rotten stump, engaged in its sleepy song, it is mostly on wing in pursuit of its prey. Wayward and capricious, its movements certainly appear to the solitary dreamer in the gloaming, who sometimes wonders what the bird can mean by its eccentric wheels—not considering that it has to follow the fickle multitude of moths and beetles.

I have often put up the night-jar when grouse-shooting, and once discovered its pair of unfledged

[1] The landrail, in the summer nights, is an exception to this rule. The nearer you approach, the more harsh and grating is the vibration of its crake. Not so the cuckoo, as any one will find who has the hap to be under the tree where he is calling, in the dusk of a still summer eve.

young close to the place it rose from. It frequents rough waste ground on the borders of cultivation, and is very fond of slopes of bracken—hence the name of fern-owl. If found in the heather, there are always copses or woods near, no doubt for the supply of large night-insects they afford. When routed by daylight, from a ferny dingle or a heathery brae, its flight is more like a leaf driven by the wind, than the spontaneous movements of a bird. Very different is its bearing in the dewy twilight of a cloudless day. It will then fly round the intruder, with a threatening attitude, often so near as almost to touch him—sometimes settling on the path, within a few yards of his feet. If traced, by its monotonous note, to a favourite perch, upon the branch of a decayed tree, it snaps its wings in taking flight, like a smiter pigeon, uttering a weak, plaintive squeak. One that I winged, by opening its capacious mouth, and hissing like a cat, had a most formidable appearance; but it had no power to hurt even a child. The toes are toothed inside, to enable it to catch moths, cockchafers, &c., as it seizes prey, like owls, with its feet.

If the winter nights are fine, and no moon, ivy owls may often be heard in full chorus at the grey of morning, which is sometimes continued till break of day. They take their station upon a few chosen perches, hooting some time upon each, and return night after night to the same places, whether a favourite tree, ruin, or outbuilding of any kind. Five years

ago, I had a pair of tame tawny owls that lived in a tool-house in the garden. They hooted every fine spring and winter night. One was so tame that it always flew against my legs when I brought its food at nightfall. Sometimes it was so dark that I could not see it, but only heard a plaintive wail, and then felt a rush at my feet. If I was later than usual it perched on the balcony, uttering this weak cry. When I placed a bit of meat upon the table, it flew into the room, seized the meat, and, flitting into the darkness again, was no more seen that night. Both of these owls were very fond of earth-worms, and devoured great numbers at a time. If given too much liver, they hid the overplus under a bush, or in a box border, but never covered it up like a fox or dog. Both came every evening at dusk to drink at their water-dish, which operation was performed after the manner of hens. I have seen them continue sipping at intervals for ten minutes at a time. After a fall of snow in early spring, I watched both rolling upon it, occasionally taking a small peck, which perhaps served instead of water. I rather think the tool-house, from being closely shut up, with only two small holes for air, was too hot for birds of such warm plumage—hence their thirst. These owls were not of the same brood; one (the male) was a bright tawny, the other sober brown. After remaining eight months at large, these most interesting pets took their departure about the time of incubation. Their hoot-

ing was occasionally heard some distance off, but they never returned to their former abode.

I supplied their place by a pair of white or barn owls. They were, however, kept close prisoners by a wire door, which admitted plenty of air into the tool-house. The habits of these owls were less nocturnal than those of the ivy ones. They frequently fed in the daytime, but I never saw them drink, although supplied with water. They *do* hoot, but very rarely. I heard one six times in succession, and then it ceased. Their music is a little different from the brown owl's. It is only one prolonged cadence, lower and not so mournful as the first hoot of the tawny fellow. They never utter the second juggling whoop of that owl, at least that I have heard. In fact, the habits of the white owl are to be so constantly on wing, beating hedgerows and fields for mice, that he seldom allows himself time for any nocturnal melody, except what he can utter during his silky flight. This is a most harsh scream, and has rightly dubbed him the screech-owl. My tame ones very often gave a sort of complaining squeak like a very young pig. This was repeated sometimes for hours. It may be that they were dissatisfied at not being allowed the free use of their wings. In the daytime they sometimes snored as loud as a plethoric gentleman of the olden time. Some naturalists say that this snoring is the complaint of the young in the nest for food. How came it, then, that my two old

ones, which had as much food as they could consume, were guilty of these nursery manners?

I have before noticed that the white owl comes out earlier than the brown, and may frequently be seen hunting for prey whenever the sun's glare is a little mellowed by the first shade of evening. Their eyes, not being so large as the ivy owl's, may collect fewer rays in the darkness, but this is made up by a clearer vision in light. They are evidently more expert mousers than the brown, which may in part account for the latter's destructiveness among young game. I recollect nearly all the young pigeons in my father's dove-cot being harried by a pair of brown owls. It was some months before the robbers were discovered.

The wings of the ivy owl are not so long in proportion to its body and tail as those of the white; neither is its flight so buoyant, although equally soft and spectre-like. It is thus less formed for beating a large extent of country for mice, and must often content itself with promiscuous feeding. Mice, on the contrary, seem to be almost the exclusive food of the barn owl; and he is a lucky farmer whose barn is tenanted by them. Some aver that the young will die unless they have a constant supply of mice. I have two living proofs against this assertion, which were brought up principally upon raw meat.

A tame white owl supersedes the necessity of a cat. My little boy had one kept in the kitchen. Its dexterity in catching mice was the wonder of

all who saw it. Once, when a mouse had been troublesome in the night, he darkened the window next morning, and brought up his owl. In a very short time there was a crash, a faint squeak, and the mouse was never heard again. This owl used sometimes to startle strangers, by coming down upon their shoulders with the noiseless spirit-like flight which enabled it to surprise the mice;—when they looked round they encountered a sage face peering inquisitively into theirs. The top of the wings of white owls are beautifully pencilled, and make the best artificial white moths.

The habits of the long-eared owl are pretty much like those of the white, only it is oftener met with in wild unfrequented places, and is also more apt to perch and rest for a while, when seeking prey. I have shot them in mistake for woodcocks, flying between me and the sky after nightfall. They skim copses and hedgerows exactly like the white owl, but do not come out so early. I have sometimes put them up in open daylight, out of the heather, where there were neither trees nor rocks. But they are more often flushed from some thick fir-tree, which seems a favourite retreat, especially if surrounded by heath or brushwood. A very fine specimen of this bird was brought me one summer. It had been entangled in a net placed over some seeds, to protect them from the small birds. The mice were also feeding on these seeds, and *they* of course attracted the owl. It was a beautiful little creature, with its bright eyes of yellowish

red, and small face animated by fear. The cry of this owl is neither so loud nor harsh as that of the white.

I one day noticed a pair of young long-eared owls at a bird-fancier's in Edinburgh. Thinking that they would be hospitably received and well treated by the possessors of the tool-house, I bought and ceremoniously introduced them to each other. Next morning I perceived the long-ears cowering at the farthest end of the house, and directing timid glances to their host and hostess. Still fancying they would become better friends, I paid no attention, although I saw some *brown* feathers ominously scattered about. Two nights after, the white ones pecked them both to death! Such barbarity would have been quite in keeping with the unkindly disposition of the hawk; but one was quite unprepared for it in the sedate and sagacious owl.

From the small hawk head of the short-eared owl, it most likely hunts on the wing, though I have never seen it search for prey. I have several times started it in the daytime, during autumn and winter, from tangled heathery dells where there are fir or yew trees. I once pursued a short-eared owl from tree to tree on Inch Connachan, about the beginning of September. It appeared more timid than any of the other owls, and would not let me come within a hundred yards. Mice seemed to have been its attraction to the island; for I remember that, after it had been planted to some extent, so much injury was

done by the mice that a boat-load of cats were imported on purpose to destroy them! There are a few fine old Scotch firs on the island, and out of one of these flew the owl, always winging his way straight to another, quite heedless of the glaring sun.

The long-eared owl formerly reared its young in the Castle Rock of Edinburgh; one was shot in 1849 close to Portobello. The barn owl also used to hatch every year in Craigmillar Castle, about a mile from the city. The male took up his quarters during the day in a niche of the old dining-hall. When I entered he turned a sleepy face, and then quietly took himself off by the hole where a window was. My tame ones always showed the same dislike of intrusion during their nap. If I moved my head from side to side at their wire door, they at once imitated me most absurdly, and continued to make a pendulum of their heads so long as I set them the example.

THE MOUNTAIN-FOX.

OCCASIONALLY, while ranging for roes, the hounds come on the track of a hill-fox; they will then show even more than their usual keenness, and open with greater ardour. As the same passes often serve for both, the roe-hunter has sometimes an opportunity of shooting this wily destroyer. Such a chance only occurs when prey is scarce on the mountains, and he leaves them to seek it in the woods below; I therefore do not recommend having a charge of smaller shot in one barrel—a plan adopted by some.

Any one who sees the hill-fox bounding along within fair distance, will immediately be struck with the difference of his appearance from that of the small cur which never leaves the low grounds. The mountain-fox is a splendid-looking fellow: even the sneaking gait of the enemy of the poultry-yard has, in a great measure, left him; he seems to feel that he breathes a freer air, and lives by more noble

plunder. He is extremely destructive to all game within his range, and the havoc he makes among the hill-lambs is a serious loss to the farmer. He will also not unfrequently attack and destroy full-grown sheep. To prevent the increase of these freebooters, a man is appointed for each district of the Highlands, called the "fox-hunter," whose business it is to search out and destroy the young litters, in which he is ably seconded by the farmers and shepherds.

The place selected by the mountain-fox for rearing its young is widely different from that of its pigmy relation of the Lowlands. Unlike the latter, who chooses an old badger-earth or drain, in the midst, perhaps, of a pheasant-preserve, the hill-fox prefers some wild and craggy ravine on the top or side of a mountain, far removed from the haunts of men. In spring, these places are narrowly searched by the shepherds, and the den (for you cannot call the clefts of the rock an earth) often detected by the quantities of wool, feathers of grouse, &c., scattered about the entrance. These are the remains of prey brought to the young; for as soon as they are able to eat flesh, the old ones leave them during the day, bringing them food morning and evening.

When the litter is discovered, the fox-hunter is brought into requisition (who often at this time has more calls than he can answer); his terriers are sent into the den, and the young massacred; a watch is then set to command a view all round, in order, if

possible, to shoot the old ones when they return. I have been told by people thus employed, that they had no idea of the proverbial cunning of the fox until they saw it shown upon such occasions. Although the place has been perfectly bare, the old ones have come unperceived within ten yards of the party, and were at last only discovered by the straining of the dogs on the leash. I have often heard the watchers say, that the ease with which the "tod" avoids their faces, and skulks behind their backs, is most surprising. If the foxes escape the guns, as they commonly do, the "streakers"[1] are slipped upon them, and, if not then run down, nothing remains to be done but again to set the watch. So long as the old ones are prevented from entering, they will return morning and evening for several days; but should either of them get access, and miss the young, they come back no more. At those times of the year when there are no litters, the usual way of hunting is to place a man, with a streaker or greyhound ready to slip, upon the top of the neighbouring hills; the fox-hunter then draws all the correis, crags, &c., where they prowl. Should Reynard be started, he is almost sure to take a course over the top of one of the hills where the men are posted. He comes up all blown, and, if observed (which, I must say, is seldom the case), has

[1] A breed between the largest size of greyhound and foxhound. Some of them are swift, very savage, and admirably adapted for the purpose.

a fresh streaker slipped upon him, which ought to run him down.

I may here give an account of a hunt I had with one of my brothers, after as fine a mountain-fox as ever prowled upon the wild moor. We had gone on a roe-hunting expedition to a high and steep hill in Dumbartonshire, the lower part of which was a larch and oak copse, the centre a large pine-wood, and the top covered with long heather. After choosing our passes between the pine-wood and copse, we sent a first-rate old hound to draw the latter; scarcely had it been in the cover ten minutes, when it opened upon a cold scent, and continued puzzling for a considerable time. As this was not his wont when upon a roe, we half suspected a fox: presently the scent warmed, and in a short time the hound opened gaily. Our hopes were high, as it came straight in the direction of our passes. In a moment I heard my brother fire: and the baying of the hound ceasing shortly after, I concluded the shot had taken effect, and walked off to see what he had killed. When I had gone a little distance, I met him running and calling to me to get into my pass again, as he had shot at an enormous fox in the thickest part of the cover; and as it had doubled back, which had occasioned the check, it would most likely try my pass next. I wheeled about at full speed, and arrived just too late for a deadly shot. When within seventy yards of the pass, the fox was bounding over the stone wall that

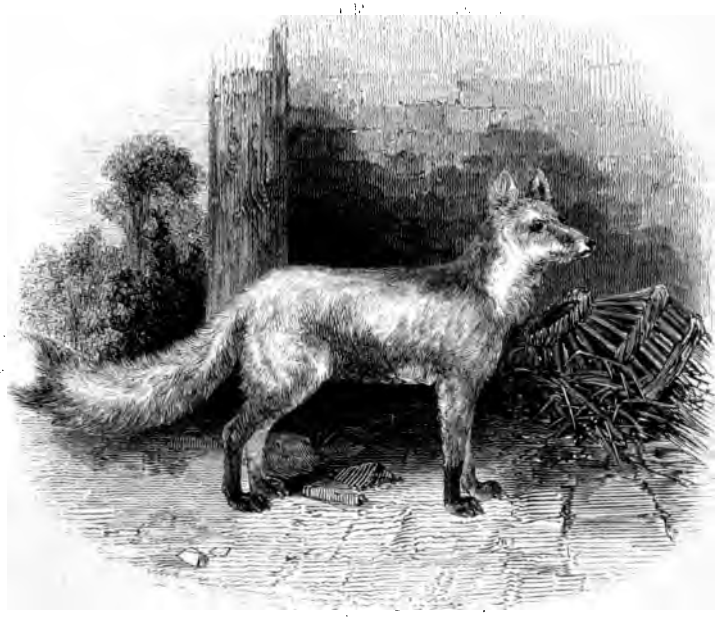
divides the copse from the pine-wood, and presenting his broadside, a very distant but clear and open shot, I discharged both barrels, and watched narrowly to see if he was hit. The ground was level for a short way, and no abatement of his speed was perceptible; but as soon as he began to climb the hill, a labouring motion at once told that one of us had wounded him. Without stopping to load, I ran to see if there was blood upon the grass, and when thus engaged, the hound, which had recovered the track, came up full cry. I had no choice left but to breast the hill, and, if possible, keep within sound of the dog. Panting and breathless, I could hear the bay more and more distant, and was just beginning to fear that the fox's object was the savage ravines of Glen Douglas, when it ceased on a sudden. Encouraged by the hope that he might be run down, I redoubled my exertions, and after scrambling a mile and a half from where I fired, saw the hound at check, at the top of the pine-wood where it joins the heather. I made several unsuccessful casts above; and then, thinking that, unable to climb the hill, he had returned to the shelter of the wood, I was making a circle below, when he sprang out of the heather, not thirty yards off, and ran straight down the hill, his lagging and staggering gait showing that he had got his death-wound. I would now have given a good deal had my gun been loaded; but not a moment was to be lost, as the hound viewed the fox, and was again full cry. I dashed over stock and

Mountain Fox.

stone, but it was not long before there was another pause in mid career. When I came up, the ground was perfectly bare, not a furze-bush to cover a rat, and the hound completely at fault. I had just taken out my powder-flask to load, when, from no other concealment than the bare stem of a fallen fir-tree, the fox a second time burst out, as fair a shot as I could wish. The hound was close to his brush, so back went my powder-flask into my pocket, and I rushed down the steep with reckless desperation. The bay became fainter and fainter; my head grew dizzy: I had run a distance of three miles on one of the steepest hills in Scotland, and had just given up hope of another check, when I heard a woodman's axe. More by signs than by words, I made him comprehend that he must follow the dog as long as he was able; sat down to rest for a moment, and then loaded my gun. No sound was now to be heard; the whole wood seemed as if it had never been disturbed. I shouldered my gun, and was proceeding, as I thought, in the direction of the chase, when I met my brother, who had from the first taken a different route, in order to intercept the fox at another point. We proceeded together in search of hound and woodman, but for a long time unsuccessfully. At last we thought of returning to the place where I first found him at work. Our delight may be imagined, when we saw the hound tied up, the woodman smoking his pipe, and the fox lifeless on the ground, a perfect monster. The man's

account was, that after following a considerable way, and being nearly distanced, there was a sudden check: when he came up he found the fox dead, the hound standing over him, without having touched a hair—he had run till his heart was broken. We sent this magnificent fox to be stuffed at the College Museum, Glasgow. Those who had charge of it told us they had never seen one nearly so large, and many who came on purpose to see it were equally astonished at its size. It is now in my possession; and the engraving shows most correctly the difference between it and a very fine specimen of the poultry-fox, shot by myself in my brother's preserves. The brush of the larger fox is not longer than that of the smaller, and less white on the tip, but it is uncommonly thick and bushy. He stands very high upon his legs, which are exceedingly muscular; his head is very broad, and his nose not nearly so peaked as the other's; his coat is also much more shaggy, and mixed with white hairs—an invariable mark of the hill-fox, and which makes his colour lighter and a less decided red than that of the Lowland fox.

Fewer and fewer of the badger's tenements among the crags of Glen Falloch are now challenged or required by the hill-fox, his supplanting rival. Litter destruction, trap, and gun are telling on the red prowler, and, like the marten and wild-cat, he is gradually becoming rarer. Still, the old-fashioned fox-hunter is not yet banished from the primeval lands of Glen Falloch, but conducts his spring and



Cur Fox.

autumn hunts in the stereotyped style of "sixty years since."

He is a dark bony man in the decline of life, descended from a race of fox-hunters, his father and grandfather having had charge of the same wild district as himself. Scrupulously polite and courteous to gentlemen—when addressing me he always confers the honour of knighthood—if irritated by the farmers or shepherds composing his hunt, he is a perfect master of Gaelic slang. Being a good running shot, he is as punctilious in claiming precedence for the first chance at a fox as the chief of the olden time at the stag; and woe betide the subordinate who dares to fire before him! Two farmers having bolted Reynard with their terriers from some rocks, and missed him just when the "tod-hunter" was rushing up, he saluted them with such a volley of abuse as completely stunned the whole party. One of the bunglers soon recovered presence of mind enough to unpocket a whisky-flask and deal a glass round; then, turning to the fox-hunter, "Had it no been for your ill-tongue ye suld hae had yin tae;" which knowing dodge as effectually cooled the deathsman of the "tods" as if it had been a bucket of water.

How different soever their characters or dispositions may be, there is no doubt that men of the same occupation acquire a family likeness. Rat-catchers, "molemen," the old beadles of the Kirk, characteristically nicknamed "bell-tows," as well as

cabmen, weavers, tailors, shepherds, &c., all are outwardly modelled into shape by the tools of the shop they work in. No better example of this general rule then the Highland tod-hunter. His free step, bronzed half-savage face, keen eye, and sinewy frame, tell tales of a wild life among mountains and precipices, equally callous to the winter blast or summer sun.

"Long, long ago," I was fishing with a companion of my boyish days in a quiet nook of the "Pass of Glencroe," when we met a man such as I have described, with a few ragged terriers at his foot. He was the Arrochar fox-hunter, and had been searching the high-lying shielings for a stray hound. My friend remarked that he had never seen a finer specimen of the genus. With his bold bearing, hardy weather-beaten face, erect wiry frame, short round foot in hobnailed brogue, lithe active gait, and long gun over his shoulder, this Arrochar hillsman was the very embodiment of Evan Dhu in 'Waverley.'

The fox-hunter's occupation on Luss and Arrochar has been gone for many a long year, and I never expected to see this last remnant of them more. Some time ago, when landing from the Loch Lomond steamboat at Balloch, on the Leven, a little, bent, very round-shouldered old man, with whey-coloured weaver visage, a suit of decent black clothes, splay feet cased in thin Wellingtons, asked if I did not know Gregor Macgregor. His voice was weak, his step tottering and feeble—how could I know him, poor fellow?

He was as unlike the Gregor of the mountains as a turkey-buzzard to an eagle. He had completely succumbed, body and mind. There he was, stranded in the print-mill, like a vessel wrecked among the breakers—

> "Oh, how unlike her course at sea,
> Or his free step on hill or lea!"

I have noticed that foxes are less addicted to the higher cairns than badgers. The reason, no doubt, is that the vixen likes to be in the midst of prey when rearing her litter. My sons and I, however, have sometimes flushed the dog-fox on the baldest mountain-tops. The sedate badger never wanders very far from its home, and indeed is unable, from its short thick legs and ungainly form, to travel any distance for prey. About the end of autumn their food of wasps or beehives, slugs, beetles, &c., is very plentiful, and is eked out by the carcasses of braxy sheep. They then become extremely fat, and my boys trapped two in October covered with lard like pork. One of them being a very large male, with bright silvery hair, I had him preserved for our collection. After a third capture I put an end to the raid on the harmless "brocks."

THE WILD-CAT.

THE wild-cat is now rare in this country. Although I have spent a great part of my life in the most mountainous districts of Scotland, where killing vermin formed the gamekeeper's principal business, and often my own recreation, I have never seen more than five or six genuine wild-cats. Many, on reading this, will perhaps wonder at my statement, and even give it a flat contradiction, by alleging the numbers that have come under their own notice. Nay, I was even gravely told by a gentleman from the south of England, a keen observer and fond of natural history, that there were wild-cats there,[1] and the skin of a cat killed in one of the southern counties was sent to me as a proof. This, I need hardly say, was the large

[1] I have been frequently assured that wild-cats have been killed on the Cumberland and Westmoreland hills; but, never having seen any specimens, I cannot speak from my own knowledge. There is no doubt that martens formerly existed in some of the most hilly and wooded districts of England.

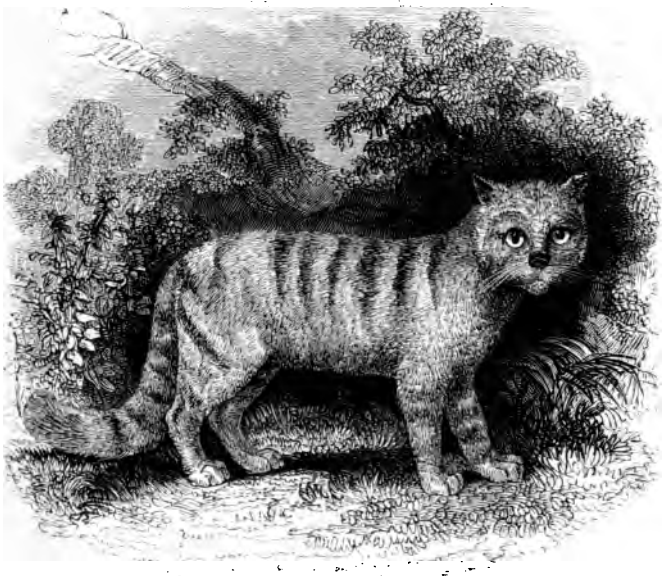
and sleek coat of an overgrown Tom, whose ancestors, no doubt, had purred upon the hearth-rug.

I am far from meaning that there are no cats running wild in England; of course, wherever there are tame cats, some of them, especially the very old ones, will forsake their homes, and live by plunder in the woods. These may also breed; but their progeny, though undomesticated, will always be widely different in habits, in appearance, in strength, and in ferocity, from the true cat of the mountains. I have seen no less than thirty of these *naturalised wild-cats* trapped in a year in a single preserve in the Highlands;[1] some of *them* might have been mistaken for the true breed. The colour in both was pretty much alike, but there were other points which clearly showed their domestic origin. They were, in fact, a cross between the wild and the tame cat. I have seen many of this kind stuffed in museums and collections, as fine specimens of the wild-cat, and believed to be so even by those who might have known better.

[1] The mischief done to game even by the house-cat, especially if half starved in the cottages of the poor, may be shown from the admission of a witness whose evidence will not be doubted. A friend of mine had shot a large cat in a covert adjoining the cottage of an old woman, and, being rather pleased at ridding the preserve of such an enemy, was carrying it too ostentatiously past her door. She *banged* out in a fury, demanding "how he *daur'd* to kill the best cat in a' the country?" He replied that "wandering cats were never of much use for mice." "*Mice!* Wha's speakin' o' mice, or rats aither? There was scarcely a day she didna bring in a young hare, or a rabbit, or a paitrick. *Use!* It wad be somethin' to be prood o' if thae ill-faured brutes o' dogs o' yours were half as usefu'!!"

The unerring marks of the thorough-bred species are,—first, the great size; next, the colour, which does not vary as in the domestic animal, but is always a dusky grey, brindled on the belly and flanks with dingy brown—hair long and rough, the head exceedingly broad, ears short, tusks extremely large. Another very distinguishing point is the great length and power of the limbs. It stands as high as a good-sized dog. But perhaps the most unfailing mark of all is the tail, which is so long and bushy as to strike the most careless observer. In the males it is generally much shorter than in the females, but even more remarkable, being almost as thick as a fox's brush.

The engraving is taken from the largest female that has ever been killed in Dumbartonshire, and most correctly shows the difference of its size from that of a full-grown house-cat. It was trapped on the banks of Loch Lomond in the depth of winter, having come down to the low ground in quest of prey. The bait was half a hare, hung on a tree, the trap being set immediately under. The person who went to inspect it thought, when at a little distance, that a yearling lamb was caught. As he came near, the cat sprang up two or three feet from the ground, carrying the large heavy trap as if scarcely feeling its weight. He would have had great difficulty in killing it, had he not dodged round the tree when aiming a blow. I have seen two males bearing the same proportion to



It will be observed that the Wild-Cat is crouching a little, which takes off from its height, while full effect is given to that of the Tame.

this specimen, both in size and fierceness of aspect, as an old half-wild Tom to a chimney-nook mother tabby. One of these was shot by a gamekeeper, when on a grouse-shooting expedition, in a very remote range; the other was trapped near the top of a high mountain.

Except in the depth of a very severe winter, the wild cat seldom leaves its lone retreat. Nothing comes amiss to it in the shape of prey; lambs, grouse, hares, are all seized with equal avidity. The female fears nothing when in defence of her young, and will attack even man himself. She generally rears them in rocky clefts and precipices. I saw a couple of young ones that were killed in one of the mountain cairns; they were nearly as large as a house-cat, although not many weeks old. It was curious to see their short tails, and helpless, unformed, kitten look, contrasted with their size. Several attempts were made to shoot the old one, but she was never seen; probably, upon missing her young, she forsook the rocks.

The wild-cat has seldom more than three or four young ones at a time—often only two.

A sad and rather romantic story connected with the wild-cat occurred in 1840, in the neighbourhood of my residence at that time. The farmer of Ben Ledi had detected some young wild-cats among the massy precipices near the top of that sublime mountain. One morning, after desiring his family

to tell his brother (who was expected from Edinburgh on a visit) that he would be back in the afternoon, he left his home and wound his way up to the rocks of the wild-cats' den. Not appearing at nightfall, they became much alarmed, and arranged a party to search the mountain at break of day. As he had said something about destroying the wild-cats, they determined first to seek him there. Within a short distance of the precipice they at once saw him seated on a rock quite dead! His shepherd's staff, with his gully-knife tied on the end of it, was lying by his side, and a full pinch of snuff between his fingers. They traced a stream of blood to the wild-cats' rock, and upon looking at the knife it was dyed red also. The whole was soon apparent. The farmer, in endeavouring to stab the cats with his spear-knife, had stumbled upon it, and divided the femoral artery. His first natural impulse was to run home; but immediately getting faint, he had attempted to refresh himself with a pinch, when his hand fell powerless for ever. The man's face was familiar to me: I had often exchanged with him the friendly greeting when rowing up Loch Lubnaig for a few hours' fly-fishing; and I could hardly realise that he whom I had seen working at his peats a few days before, in full health and vigour, was now stiff and cold as the rocks of his mountain. The lesson was strange and startling, that he who had prepared the weapon

of death, should so suddenly have perished by it himself. Full of life's hopes and cares, with an eye undimmed and his natural force unabated, he had gained the ridge of the Hill of God,[1] there all unwarned and unattended—to die.

[1] Ben Ledi signifies in English "the hill of God;" and, I believe, takes its name from the old tradition of pilgrims crossing the mountain to sacrifice on the other side.

THE MARTEN.

If this beautiful connecting link between the foumart[1] and the cat is indigenous to this country, it is certainly in a fair way of being exterminated. It used to be pretty well scattered over the wild, wooded districts of Scotland, but every year it is becoming rarer. The marten has none of the offensive odour of the foumart, and has even greater agility and alertness than the cat. Running at a little distance, it looks exactly like a giant weasel. In some the breast is nearly white, whilst in others it is a bright orange, which has given occasion to the supposition that the two are varieties of the species; but I have no doubt they are the same. Of the many I have seen trapped or shot, I always remarked that the male was darker in the colour, and his breast almost white; that of the female was orange, and the fur lighter brown. I had a male and female stuffed

[1] A corruption from the Teutonic *ful*, fetid, and *marder*, a marten.

that were trapped together at the same bait, exactly answering to this description.

When pursued, the marten, although its legs are so short, can run faster than a cat; this it does by a succession of springs, for which its long body gives it a great advantage. As a last resource, it will climb trees, and spring from one to another like a squirrel. I once, with two or three companions, had a curious hunt of this kind. The marten had been driven by a very swift terrier into a clump of pines, which it so nearly resembled in colour that we had great difficulty in keeping sight of it. At last we thought of cutting off its retreat by climbing all the adjacent trees: the creature showed great coolness when thus driven to extremities, awaiting the approach of its enemy, perched on the pinnacle of the tallest pine; and it was only when one of our party got quite close, that it sprang from the top to the bottom of the tree, rebounding nearly a yard from the hard turf, just where I was standing, and, not a whit disconcerted, darted off at full speed, gained a precipice, and made good its escape.

Unless hard pressed, however, the marten is more apt to go to earth, or take refuge in the clefts of the rocks, than upon trees. When run to ground by a foxhound, there is no creature more easily smoked out—it will bolt almost immediately; and numbers are killed in this manner, although, from the quickness and uncertainty of its exit, it is anything but an easy shot.

When in quest of prey it is daring as well as mischievous: not so apt to leave its secure fastness in the daytime, but under cover of darkness it will travel many miles, committing great devastation in preserves; and unless trapped or shot, it will return night after night to the poultry-yard, killing many more fowls than it devours. One of these pilferers had nearly made a clean sweep of my father's poultry. It kept peering over the perch with the greatest impudence, and could scarcely be driven away by the dairymaid: no sooner was she out of sight than it would return. The farm-overseer at last procured a trap, and having set it without art or covering, the loud screams of the robber presently made known his capture.

The marten generally selects a magpie's nest in the thickest pine-tree, and there rears its young; hence it has obtained the name of the pine-weasel. One, however, in the Black Mount, had the impudence to select royal quarters for its progeny, and to take possession of the eagle's castle. The forester having reason to think that the bird was sitting hard, peeped over the cliff into the eyrie. To his amazement, a marten was suckling her kittens in comfortable occupancy. As he had a fair look down, he watched them for some time, intending to return in a few days with his gun. When he did so, the martens, old and young, had left the nest, and no trace of them was to be found. Another was brought me

that had its litter in the thatch of an old barn; it was detected by a dog, driven out, and shot. The young were rather smaller than kittens, and quite as sweet and clean.

If seized by the breast, the marten, like the cat, is easily killed by a good dog; but the skull is so hard that I have seen one, when released from a trap with all its legs broken, roll away upon the ground, after receiving half-a-dozen hard blows on the head from the keeper's cudgel. This animal, being easily trapped or run down, is very rare now.

THE OTTER.

THIS eccentric creature is so much hidden from notice, partly owing to its resources for concealment lying both in land and water, that its habits are not much observed, although it is so generally distributed throughout the three kingdoms. It excites greater attention on the rocky coasts from being occasionally hunted there. In the West Highlands, especially, many of the resident proprietors pique themselves on the excellence of their otter-terriers. Some few keep hounds for the purpose; but the terrier is a very good substitute in these wild districts, and of course far more easily procured.

A good otter-hunt is a very curious sight, and from being able for the most part to see the dogs, and keep up with them, the interest seldom flags. In the Lowlands and Border counties of England, where otters are not so numerous, the foumart is often hunted instead with otter-hounds. I was told

by a subscriber to a Cumberland otter-pack, that they had once run a polecat twelve miles from the place where they found his cold drag, and that a six or seven miles' chase is nothing uncommon. It must have taken the foumart nearly the whole night to have travelled this distance, and he is generally snug in his retreat many hours before the hounds are even laid on his track. A true otter-hound will, however, catch the scent immediately, if his game has been on the ground or in the river the previous night. The real breed, supposed to be a cross between the old English hound and a rough terrier, is very rare. They have shaggy coats of coarse wiry hair, but smooth heads and ears; in fact, a hound's head with a rough coat fit for the water. Most that we see now are either altogether rough or smooth. There is no dog more takes my fancy than one of these ancient thorough-bred otter-hounds. His weird look of hoar antiquity always associates him with "grisly eld;" and his characteristic method of working his amphibious quarry adds to the interest his appearance creates.

Terriers are best in rocky cavernous places, and seldom fail to make the otter bolt if they can get near him. From the abundance of prey, the sea-haunting otters grow to a great size; inland ones frequenting heavy dead water, where fish abound, are often large also. A remarkably fine specimen of a fresh-water otter was trapped some winters ago on

the Thames above Henley, by a keeper, who sold him to me for a trifle.

Otters are always pretty plentiful on Loch Lomond, and some heathery rocks full of treacherous hollows, close to the water, on Inch Connachan, are called "the otter rocks," from the otters rearing their young among them every year. One of the island game-watchers, a few summers ago, saw an old female, followed by two young cubs, swim from these rocks to Inch Fad, a distance of two miles. The day was very calm, and the dam swam slowly to accommodate her young. In an old channel of the Finlas Burn, a pair were often to be seen in summer disporting in the pool, nearly tepid from the heat of the sun. They seemed to be enjoying a warm bath.

The otters seldom frequented Rossdhu bay till the autumn floods, when their sputtering blow was heard in the moonshine. Thomas A'thing, whom I shall have occasion to refer to afterwards, always knew when they were there, and the odds were that he sold their jackets before the week was out. I recollect a very large one that carried his trap into the deep—for Thomas, like a knowing otter-trapper, never fastened it. A heavy rain all that night and next day, raised the loch, and prevented him from "looking the trap." When the weather cleared he found it gone, and no float in the water to mark where it was. Phlegmatic Thomas immediately knew that the string was too short from the loch being so high; so he

"consulted his raison," settled where the trap *should* be, kept his secret till the loch grew less, then returned and found the float within ten yards of the spot he had calculated, and the otter fast in the trap at the bottom—of course drowned.

One day in July, when going to fish, I perceived an otter perfectly still on the top of the water in Loch Vennachar. It was a good way from the shore, and just opposite some steep rocks, where the black deep water was much frequented by salmon. It seemed on the watch like a cat, and it occurred to me that possibly it might be looking out for the rise of a fish, after the manner of seals. The renter of a stake-net fishery told me, that once, when watching the gambols of a large salmon, a seal put up its head at the distance of a mile, swam up in an incredibly short time, and caught the salmon. The seal has this advantage over the otter, that it can seize fish with its paws, and also break nets with them.

Great numbers of otters resort to the lochs of Lubnaig and Vennachar, and come down in hard weather to the streams that flow out of them. I used to be much annoyed in the winter mornings, when ranging Lennie and Garwhinnie waters for ducks, by people getting down before me to secure the salmon which the otter had "ta'en oot." Of course they put up all the wild-fowl. After a powdering of snow, the mark of a hobnailed shoe was sure to turn my course from these rivers to Loch Vennachar, as I knew

full well that the enormous foot would plod down Lennie water, and up Garwhinnie to the very loch, without leaving a nook undisturbed, if it only had a quarter of an hour's start of me. I had therefore to be at the river by break of day, and was rewarded by many a famous chance at the fowl, as well as frequent insight into the operations of the otter.

Many a fine fish have I seen lying on the shingle with only a few bites out of its neck; and, if undiscovered by the otter's scavengers, it was seldom honoured by a second visit from its captor. In snow, I generally saw where the otter had landed to dry himself; but he never strayed far from the river's bank—and indeed it would have been difficult walking, as he always left the mark of his belly ploughing the snow, if there were only two inches on the ground.

In my early shooting days, when after wild-fowl, my water-dog brought me a half-grown otter which he had seized in a drain. I could not, at first, make out what extraordinary mouthful he had picked up. When I saw it was a young otter, I brought it home alive in my game-bag, intending to tame it. But the dog had broken its back, so we were obliged to have it killed. A few years after, I shot a fine male one near the same place. My terriers came on its track in a brook. It immediately took the land a long way ahead of the dogs, and by a short cut made for the loch. I got my eye upon it slowly cantering along,

intercepted and rolled it over not thirty yards from the shore.

A friend of mine one autumn was wandering along the banks of the Tweed, and seeing the dead water of a deep pool a little agitated, he peeped cautiously over. An old otter and several young ones were paddling about in perfect security and comfort. He made a slight noise, and all disappeared as if by magic —where and how, he could not discover. After remaining quiet for a short time, they were upon the surface again in the same sleight-of-foot way. He described it as a beautiful and interesting sight, and slipped back without a second time disturbing them. He told me he had heard that Lord John Scott's otter-hounds came to the pool shortly after, on purpose to hunt them, but never discovered either the dam or her young.

The ears of the otter, buried in its fur, like those of most water-animals, give it something of a reptile appearance. But short ears are not always the characteristic of creatures that feed in and about water. There is an aquatic mouse, about the size and colour of a half-grown Norway rat, which has very large, round, transparent ears. I have often met with it when fishing the more sluggish waters of the Lowlands. It is fully as expert a diver as the common water-rat. When angling a shallow gravelly channel of the Ale in Selkirkshire, I saw one dive a distance of at least a dozen yards, and watched it swimming

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savage little creatures; they seemed to surpass even an imprisoned weasel in ferocity.

I have often noticed that loathsome creatures prey upon loathsome food. A favourite morsel of the water-

the bird walking and feeding in this manner under the pellucid waters of a Highland burn."

"Doctors as well as *tastes* differ," and so do these two observant modern naturalists. My opinion is the same as Mr St John's, and I can give the one direct evidence which condemned poor Paddy in defiance of his twenty friends. No doubt my opponents will, like Pat, stick to the twenty and ignore the damaging unit.

When my son was quartered in the north of Scotland, a gardener, living close to his barracks, noticed that most of the water-ousels of a burn running past his garden assembled in a large pool within sight of his work. As an experiment, he baited three tiny fish-hooks with salmon-roe, and placed them in the pool, when an ousel was caught next morning. My son was much interested in this ousel-fishing, and will be glad to vouch for it to any inquirer. To show that this bird likes other food besides "the larvæ of aquatic insects and fresh-water shells," I may remark having twice noted a large dew-worm wriggling in its bill. That it is destructive to salmon few will attempt to deny the testimony of Sir James Ramsay Maitland—about the highest authority for fish culture in the kingdom. Every fish naturalist has heard of or seen the perfect array of breeding-ponds at Sauchie. Last spring my son sent me the following communication from Sir James, drawn out for me:—

"CRAIGEND, STIRLING,
December 25, 1878.

"*Water-Ousels.*

"I am afraid these birds do more harm than is generally supposed to fisheries. I have this morning caught one in the act. He rose from a hole in the ice in one of the ponds containing trout-fry, with a fish about two and a half inches long in his bill. Several fish had lately been found on the ice, several yards from the hole, and the men had blamed the dipper, so I determined to watch him, and with the above result. J. R. G. MAITLAND.

"About twenty similar cases observed afterwards by me.
"J. R. G. M."

I have said, in this work, that the water-ousel's bill does not seem

rat is a bloated toad,[1] while a nest of earwigs are the choice tit-bits of the latter. As many as forty have been taken out of a toad's maw. Sheridan's remark to a poor starved man eating shrimps is equally appropriate here—"You're very like your meat."

The otter, like all animals that depend on the waters for prey, loses much of his address and cunning when cut off from his native element. Bewildered on land, he seems to feel that he has no fair play, and sometimes refuses to take advantage even of the resources within his reach. In the river or loch, on the contrary, he has always his wits about him, and will try every ruse ere he yields up his life. When hunted, and when want of air forces him to the surface, he either takes advantage of a water-leaf to cover the tip of his nose, all the rest of him being immersed, or comes up under some rotten stump precisely his own muddy colour. Flapper-shooters may notice the same instinct, when they surprise a brood of ducklings, though in a far less degree. At

formed for seizing the small fry of fish, like the king-fisher's; but on finding my mistake, the sentence has been left out in the present edition. Let me thank my very clever and kindly critic for giving me the opportunity of defending observations which were always well tested before being published.

[1] I have frequently offered my brown owls a toad, but they always refused it. They, however, greedily devoured frogs; and once, when the old male had just swallowed one, we cheated him with a toad. As soon as he detected the nauseous mouthful, he threw it from him with every symptom of disgust, although, in his hunger, he had half bolted it. Even the voracious pike rejects a toad as bait.

the signal of the mother they all dive, but come to the top again so stealthily—some under a screen of weeds, wrapped round them like a green veil, and others hidden by a hollow bank or root—that, although several are within a few yards, none may be detected until they are winded by the sagacious retriever.

WILD PIGEONS.

THERE are four kinds of dove found in a wild state in this country, the largest of which is the ring-dove or cushat, common all over the kingdom. This bird, called also the wood-pigeon, is thought by many to migrate; but if so, multitudes stay behind. Perhaps one reason for the supposition may be, that numbers congregate in the autumn and beginning of winter, under beech-trees, to feed upon the mast, and when this is all devoured they separate in search of other food. The first signal for the flocking of wood-pigeons is the yellowing of the grain; they then choose the ripest part of the field—if possible, near the centre, as being least accessible—and generally keep to the same place. When the acorns and beech-nuts fall, they greedily feed upon them; and I have sometimes taken about a dozen large acorns out of the crop of one bird. The flock are certain to return morning and evening to feed under any clump of old beeches

in the neighbourhood of their haunts. First one alights, cautiously looking all round—then another, and so on, until they drop down half-a-dozon at a time. There are often two hundred in one flock.

By building a wigwam constructed of twigs, and not disturbing the doves afterwards for a week, they will become quite fearless, and feed close to it: my anxiety to shoot a pure white one which made its appearance among the rest suggested this plan to me. Many people saw this rarity and fancied it a tame pigeon. I, however, examined it with my telescope, and plainly saw that it was a white ring-dove. Its size and shape of tail clearly showed this; but the most certain mark was a *blue* ring instead of the white one. Notwithstanding my efforts, I could not succeed in killing this bird, and only got one random shot, about eighty yards off.

The sleeping-place of this flock was a small belt of tall trees, half a mile from their feeding-ground. I constantly saw the white dove perched near the top of one of the highest trees (another undeniable proof of its wood origin), and manœuvred to obtain a shot, but was completely baffled by the wary bird. Should, however, the night resting-place of ring-doves be known, a few may easily be killed by keeping one side of the plantation, and sending some one to make a little noise on the other. They will continue flying overhead, quite within distance, until the reports of your gun have driven them all from their retreat.

Many a one have I bagged in this way, as I generally gave the pigeon woods a trial when returning home in the evening. A bad shot may have good sport by waiting for them at dusk under these roosting-trees. The only caution necessary is, not to move your gun until the birds have assured themselves that the coast is clear and no enemy lurking near. As they drop in singly, each dove peers round in all directions before settling; whereas, at feed, the first few that alight act as spies to the bevy, the rest heedlessly following. If one should chance to fly up, the whole instantly take wing with a noise like distant thunder.

When frost and snow set in, the last resource of the ring-dove is the turnip-field. Even in deep snow the turnip-tops are not beyond reach, and are generally its staple food in winter. I rather think these doves never devour the turnip itself, although wild geese do, and even ducks when pinched with hunger. In a country where there are few turnip-fields, ring-doves are seldom seen in large flocks after the beech-mast is consumed. But in the Lowland counties, they continue to resort to them in multitudes until they pair in spring. I could never see any diminution in their numbers, or signs of migration. When they begin to feed on the turnip-tops, their flesh is bitter and ill-flavoured, but the beech-mast and acorns improve it much.

Early in February, should the weather be fine and sunny, the ring-dove begins to coo. At first

there are only a few low notes in the morning and evening, but very soon this soothing sound is to be heard with greater power from every corner of the coppice. The doves may also be seen rising in the air to a considerable height, and then allowing themselves to fall with outstretched wings, repeating this motion several times, as if in exquisite enjoyment of the genial season. The coo of the ring-dove continues in a less degree during the summer, but chiefly in the morning and evening. They build very early—the nests being generally about half-way up the evergreen trees, and composed of a few twigs so loosely put together that you may see through them. Many have two broods in the year, but I should imagine not all—at least if we may judge from the decrease of those that coo and soar in summer and autumn. Numbers of branchers scarcely able to fly are to be met with in August and September. I have also found their nests with young in June—but most likely these were birds that have had their spring hatching destroyed. The nest of this bird is easily discovered; and most people who have lived in the neighbourhood of hanging woods are familiar with the bird's sudden crash through the branches, when startled from its eggs.

I once had some fancy pigeons of various kinds—croppers, tumblers, fan-tails, and carriers. It was a pleasure to feed them every morning after breakfast. One day a ring-dove most unexpectedly appeared,

and claimed a share of the barley. At first he was rather shy, but in a week or so became the boldest of the company. For two months "the stranger," as he was still called, was never once absent at morning feed. He always flew over the wall into the garden where the dovecot was placed. Sometimes, after filling his crop, he lingered with the other pigeons nearly the whole day, but never stayed over night. I had the curiosity to watch him in the twilight, in order to find out his sleeping-quarters. After several "doubles," he at last roosted on an old apple pollard in a neighbouring garden, returning every night to the same branch of the same tree. At last he became tame enough to pick grain out of my hand. As he was evidently a bird of the year, I rather think he must have been taken from the nest, and kept in a cage; but, having made his escape, hunger may have forced him to beg a meal. Poor fellow! His departure was as sudden and mysterious as his advent. We missed him one morning, and he was never seen again.

The next in size to the ring-dove is the wild pigeon, or stock-dove. Considerable mistakes seem to have arisen about this bird, some fancying it altogether migratory, and others confounding it with the rock-dove, and tracing it as the origin of the domestic pigeon. The habits of the stock-dove are very different from those of the latter. They are always in summer met with in pairs, perching upon

old trees, and building their nests in the decayed hollows. I found two myself in the grounds of Park Place in Berkshire, where a few stock-doves flock and roost with the ring-doves every winter. I had several times seen one of the pairs before the hatching-time. They were very wild, and flew more rapidly than ring-doves. About a month after, I stumbled upon the nest in the fork of an aged tree. It was only about ten feet from the ground, and I might have shot the female at any time flying off; the other nest was near the top of an ivy-girt birch. These birds, as well as most of the pigeon tribe, lay two eggs, generally a male and a female. Hence the Scotch phrase, when there are only a son and daughter of a family, "a doo's nest."

The stock-dove is gregarious in winter, like the ring-dove, and feeds on beech-mast, &c., in the same way. They are not found farther north than the midland counties of England. They are beautifully shaped, and of a bluish-grey colour, the males having a fine golden neck. Unlike the other wild pigeons, their voice is a *failure*, being only a sort of grunt.

"Could it be known in what manner the stock-dove builds, the doubt 'whether they are the origin of our domestic pigeon' would be settled with me at once." So writes White of Selborne. It seems strange that this gifted naturalist could not discover a single stock-dove's nest. They build in hollow trees,

decayed stumps, and stocks of pollards; hence their name. Every spring I have visited the south of England, and searched the primeval forests favourable to their breeding, I have found their nests. In such woods I have listened sometimes to the ring-dove, the stock-dove, and the turtle-dove, all calling at the same moment. White apparently had not heard of the "blue rocks" of our coast. I shot a pair of rock-doves right and left flying out of Nature's pigeon-house—a cave amongst the rocks of the Stonehaven coast—and the male is a fine contrast to a beautiful male stock-dove in my case of wild pigeons.

The rock-dove (the *true* wild pigeon) is about the size of the preceding, and has a white spot above the tail. I have often met with them among the rocky caverns of the coast. They fly with great rapidity, which may account for the name "blue rocks," applied by the admirers of the pigeon-trap to their fleetest birds. Both in the Caithness and Morayshire cliffs, I have noticed some brown and light-coloured; these, most likely, had joined their wild associates from some pigeon-house, although there were none within a distance of several miles. This is the more likely, as the habits of the rock-doves are exactly those of the domestic species. Their nests are never fixed in trees, and when tame pigeons leave the dovecot, they always build in similar places—viz., old ruins, and sheltered rocks and caverns. In fact, I have little

doubt that they are the same bird in a wild and tame state.

One word for the turtle, that fairest of doves, and most welcome harbinger of spring. There is a plaintive murmur in its coo, connected as it is with the idea of constancy and truth that has made it in all ages, *par excellence*, the bird of love and song. One peculiarity of this gentle creature is its concealing itself among the most impervious places of the wood, so that it is not easily seen. It generally builds near the top of thick evergreen trees, and, as it does not come to this country till the end of April, and returns in September, it only rears one brood, taking its journey as soon as the young ones are able to travel.

On first arriving here, they often frequent the green corn-fields in pairs; at the time of incubation, however, they keep more to the woods, where nothing but the coo betrays their retreat. In some parts of England, I am told, they are gregarious after they have reared their young, and frequent the corn and pea fields like other doves. But I have never seen above four or five in company. I once traced out one by its coo, and had the satisfaction of seeing him perched on the topmost branch of an old oak, lowering his head at intervals, and pouring forth his tender notes. When partridge-shooting in Suffolk, a pair of turtles rose off the stubble, and settled upon one of the top branches of a high tree. I continued my

range in their direction, and killed both at a shot. Neither had the patch on the side of the neck, which they lose soon after hatching-time.

Turtles are often met with in the northern counties of England, and are not unfrequently found in Scotland; but the latter are almost always young birds, which take a wider range than old ones do.

THE COMMON DOTTEREL.

THE BLACK-THROATED DIVER.

WHATEVER be the reason, this bird is yearly becoming a rarer visitant to North Britain. Frequenting only a few favoured places, and ten days or a fortnight being the limit of its stay, no wonder that this beautifully-tinted variety is about as difficult to meet with as any of the whole plover tribe. Even in the palmy days of Pennant, samples of the dotterel killed in Britain were not very attainable, as the following anecdote, told me by an English clergyman, will serve to show.

When spending the winter at Great Malvern many years ago, this gentleman, being one of the directors of the Museum, was showing me the collection. I took occasion to ask him if there were any dotterels in the neighbourhood, as I had been trying for years to shoot one, but had never yet seen a single specimen

in its wild state. "When I was a young man," said he, "Pennant made me the same complaint, and suggested that, in place of being called *common*, the bird deserved the title of the *uncommon* dotterel." Soon afterwards this clergyman procured and forwarded a specimen to Pennant. And now comes the remarkable part of the story. For thirty years he never met the great naturalist, who had been totally blind for some time. After this long interval, happening to be in the old man's company, he walked up to him and said, "I suppose I need hardly hope you will remember me, Mr Pennant?" The blind man thought for a moment, and then called out with sudden eagerness, "Ah! my friend of the dotterel!"

The usual time of the dotterel's arrival in Scotland is from the 9th to the 14th of May, and they remain about ten days or a fortnight on their first ground before separating for the higher breeding-places. The nest is most difficult to find, and a dotterel's egg is therefore a great prize to the collector. They come to this country in "trips" of from five or six to a dozen, and pitch on undulating downs and hillocks near the sea. Rough grass and heather have less attraction for this bird than thin fallow fields. But the most favoured feeding-ground of all is a newly broken up and sown down field of old lea, where they seem to find the most abundant supply.

We were about to leave Edinburgh for our country

home, when a note from Dunglass warned me that the dotterels had appeared. This was on the 12th of May. On the 14th I took the earliest train out, and was at Dunglass to breakfast. Directly after, the head-keeper and two assistants were in waiting; and by every means in his power my kind host had endeavoured to insure success.

We threaded the glorious woody ravine surrounding the baronial halls of Dunglass, and I then started on a most fascinating coast drive, with my old acquaintances the Bass and the May in the distance, while the far view to the south was bounded by the romantic outline of Fast Castle, whose battlements could be dimly traced. At the side of the road was the ruin of a church, since used, or rather abused, as the grand emporium of a smuggling gang. Here many a Dirk Hatteraick of the Forth had found a safe and secret refuge for the contents of his lugger; and if the mouldering walls could speak, strange stories might they bring to light. Soon after we drove over Pease Bridge, the highest arch perhaps in Scotland. Looking down from it made one's head swim round.

The keeper had despatched one of his aides-de-camp to search the heights near the sea, but retained the other, as he, having noticed the arrival of the dotterels, could guide us to the fields where they had been seen feeding. We commenced our beat very systematically. Often in line, but sometimes sepa-

rating, we quartered each field with the regularity of well-trained setters, and never left it while there was a corner untried. And in truth there was need for this carefulness, as our game, except when the variegated breast of an old male was turned towards us, was as like the colour of fallow or lea ground as a ptarmigan to the granite rock.

The birds had shifted, and the old sub began to look unhappy; not a trace of them where he had noted two small flocks on the 11th, and we had searched all the ground strictly. The day must certainly prove a failure unless the far scout was successful. We made for his heights, and saw him watching our approach. A wave of his arm prepared us for the good news that he had spied a flock of twelve, and hoped they were safe in the adjoining fallows. Again we were foiled by the restlessness of our quarry; for in place of alighting where the man supposed, the birds had flown southwards, as a dyke-mason informed us, and passed him within throw of his trowel.

The march we then continued to the extremity of our beat, but no appearance of the flock, when the keeper suggested, as a forlorn hope, that we should re-search the field where his assistant had seen the twelve so lately. An old man was putting up a gate in one of these fields. "Perhaps he may help us, like the mason," I suggested. "Oh, sir, he's frae the Hielants; he'll no ken them!" "Donal, hae ye

seen thae birds that flee a' thegither?" "There micht be plenty wad pass me, but I couldna tell them frae ithers."

A laugh with, or at, old Donald cheered us for a look through the last two fields. Only three-quarters of an hour now remained if I wished to catch the afternoon return-train, and we had gone over one field, and half the other, when the young watcher halted and listened. I was instantly on my guard, and heard for the first time in my life the "twit, twit, twit," of the dotterel, and soon the company of twelve careered overhead at a great height. Contracting and lowering their circles, they darted out of sight behind a knoll, and we now felt sure they were snugly grounded in the same field with ourselves.

The younger assistant was on my left when we began the search, which we had scarcely done when, only a gunshot beyond him, he discovered the flock. A halt and sign brought me to his side. Next me stood a brilliant male, and the rest, a good deal scattered, were beyond him. Getting the old cock in line with as many as possible, I fired a raking charge out of my heavy duck-gun. He lay dead, as well as a couple of hens on the further side of him. The rest wheeled round and round high in the air, and again lighted in the same field. The keeper noted the spot, and brought me up to it. Again an old male was my aim; but getting the group better together, another cock and three hens fell to this discharge.

The dog-cart was close at hand, so, selecting the two brightly-plumaged cocks and two hens for my brother's collection and my own, I left Dunglass and returned to Edinburgh by the middle of the afternoon, much gratified with so agreeable a day, and the possession of so long coveted a prize.

Another tantalising bird had eluded us for many years—viz., "the black-throated diver." We already possessed specimens of the other two British divers—the Great Northern or Loon, and the Red-throat or speckled diver—both in spring and winter plumage; but black-throats, although pretty common on the northern lochs, are far more rare in the waters of the central or western Highlands. During one of our fishing tours through the wilds of Sutherland, we learned that a pair of these birds hatched yearly on a lochan a few miles from our inn, and if we shot the male, the female, who had only begun to lay, would soon provide another mate. Next morning we drove to this moor-loch, with its prettily-wooded islets, on two of which my son and I lay hid, while our attendant moved the quarry.

Snugly ensconced among the bushes of the two mid islets, we soon perceived the pair emerge from the reeds of the furthest bay, and the boatman guiding them if possible to our cross-fire. The creatures, of course, kept close together when taken in rear, and, coasting the mainland, seemed inclined to shirk a passage between the islets. This move forced me to

change ground to the opposite side of my island. I soon, however, saw them cross over and make for the very passage we had set them. Instantly regaining my first ambush, I had a full view of the splendid birds. In their gorgeous spring plumage their feathers absolutely gleamed in the sunlight. Rounding the point of my islet, they turned into the straits between the guns. My son had seen me creep away to the other side of my ambuscade, but was too much occupied with the divers to notice my return. He therefore thought that all depended on his gun, however distant the chance.

The birds were almost within reach when both dived, but soon came to the surface again, a near shot from me, and consequently a far one from him. A perceptible difference in size enabled both of us to mark the male, and my duck-gun had covered him, while my finger was just touching the trigger, when an opposite shot prostrated him on the surface. My feeling at the moment was like a person going downstairs in the dark, and reaching the last step before he expected. The object is gained sooner than intended, or even wished.

Unmixed pleasure at the brilliant prize floating on the waters quickly followed; and when our boatman rowed to land with the finest male specimen I had ever seen of this most beautiful of all divers, my content was complete.

ROCK AND RIVER OUSELS.

ALTHOUGH the rock-ousel, as his name imports, is fond of rocks and precipices, and commonly builds among them, yet a pair may often be met with haunting ferny brakes with only a few scattered stones, upon which they delight to perch. When disturbed, they fly from stone to stone, uttering a very grating chirp, which seems to be a note of defiance. One summer (1842) a good number of them came down from the hills to the garden at Lennie, and did much damage to the fruit, especially the currants. The gardener shot several, which he brought to me. The ring of the males was very dusky, and in some there were brown feathers interspersed. The females had no white ring at all. They were timid birds—much more so than the thrushes and blackbirds, their fellow-depredators—and it required some caution to get a shot at them.

A nest was found in the spring, near the foot of a

thick bush, on the bank of a rocky brook. They reared their young ones undisturbed. I think it not unlikely that the greater number of those that frequented the garden in summer were birds of that year, although the crescent of one shot by the gardener, evidently an old male, was far less pure than in spring, and certainly not so fully pronounced. A pair had their nest on the crags of Arthur's Seat, a few summers ago, and I often watched them with interest. The crescent in both, particularly the male, was silvery as the moon's, and the birds were not wild. Their song is pleasing, though melancholy. This bird has always been a great favourite with me, most likely from association, for it loves "the unplanted places."

The little dipper, or river-ousel, is no less attractive. There is a look of loneliness about this little inhabitant of the flood like the solitudes it frequents. Often, in the deepest and most tangled recess of the mountain-burn, or perched upon some gaunt stone by the side of the moorland loch, the water-ousel, when disturbed by some chance explorer of nature, will fly cheerily forward, and, resettling upon the clear water, seems, by the buoyancy of its little movements, to try to impart its happiness to the thoughtful visitant.

The food of this bird consists of water-insects, the roe of fish, &c. It is incapable of feeding at any great depth, from the want of web feet, on which

account it generally chooses the shallows where the salmon and trout roe is deposited. I have twice seen it feed upon some very minute substance about a foot from the surface, but whether animalculæ or not, it was impossible to ascertain. The first time I went after wild ducks on the river Tay, I saw a motion in a clear still creek, and when I cautiously peeped over the bank, I discovered the little bird under water, rowing itself both with wings and legs, at the same time pecking at something, apparently with as much ease as a barn-door fowl would devour a handful of grain. It was so intent on its food that I was not perceived for a few seconds; but, on looking up to see if the coast was clear, it saw me at once through the water, rose to the surface and flew away, as with one and the same motion. Another winter, my notice was attracted by just such a ripple in Lennie Water, and again I detected the ousel at his secret meal. The water in both cases was very bright, but, without a microscope, it could not be discovered whether the delicacies on which it regaled were vegetable substances or some minute water-insects.

In spring and summer these birds generally are found singly or in pairs, but in winter they often congregate in some favoured river, and may then be seen in great numbers. They do not always select the places where fish are most abundant, as we should imagine from their living so much on the roe, and the water-insects that prey on it. I stumbled upon

a newly-flown nest of these birds, when fishing the brook that separates Loch Katrine from Achray, and could easily have caught some of them; but I rather amused myself by watching their unformed bows and curtseys—copied, no doubt, from the parents, who were flitting up and down in great alarm.

The water-ousel is a hardy bird, especially for one that does not migrate in summer; and it is a novelty, when land and water are bound by an iron frost, and,

> "seized from shore to shore,
> The whole imprisoned river growls below,"

to hear this little bird, perched upon the frozen mass, strike up its cheerful song. Not another note is then to be heard, which gives it the more imposing effect, — like the nightingale at midnight, making dreariness more dreary by contrast. The pipe of this river-minstrel is not unlike the first attempts of the thrush in early spring, when a cold wind a little chills its power.

A friend of mine had the good hap to shoot a white ousel on the banks of the Clyde. I narrowly inspected it, and could not detect a single dark feather. Legs, beak, and all had exactly the same cream-coloured shade.

I have several times been fairly cheated by the water-ousel, and had a fruitless stalk for ducks through its means. Seated at a distance, upon a small stone, it is often difficult, even with one's

glass, not to mistake it for the head, and the stone for the body of a duck. If the ousel does not fly, his motions appear exactly like the duck moving its head. His restless disposition, however, seldom allows him to remain long enough on the stone to keep up the deception, and, generally before commencing operations, you see the duck's head fly off. I have noticed this bird with a large worm in its beak, which it had picked out of the banks of a mossy brook, high among the hills, its summer residence. During the severity of winter it always prefers larger streams, its favourite food being the spawn of fish and water-insects.

THE SPIRIT OF GLENCROE.

Who has not heard of the Pass of Glencroe? The hills rising perpendicularly on both sides, grey to the top with immense masses of rock, that look as if an infant's touch would roll them from their insecure basis. It was my hap to live for a summer close to this savage gorge. When the weather was dull and rainy, and the clouds hung low upon the mountain-tops, the frowning grandeur of the scene could scarcely fail to depress the most buoyant spirits; and even when the day was fine and clear, a feeling of awe at least was inspired.

When I first came to the neighbourhood of Glen-

croe it was in early summer, and, of course, the Scotch mists were thick and frequent; but, overlooking the greater angling attractions of Loch Lomond and its neighbouring streams, I generally took advantage of the fine days to wander, fishing-rod in hand, up this lonely and favourite strath, to the little moor-loch at its head.

The "Lochan Rest," so called from being close to the top of the glen, where a stone is set up with the well-known inscription, reminding the weary wayfarer to "rest and be thankful," does not hold out many inducements for fishing. The trout, although well fed, and of a very uncommon colour, are not large; and it is most probable that the "lochan," but for its situation, would have been seldom visited by me. After loitering up the glen, where was nothing to relieve the dreariness of the scene but the plaided shepherd, accompanied by his uncouth half-wild-looking dog, I generally spent an hour or two in filling my creel, and then slowly retraced my steps. The lochan was immediately under one of the most stupendous precipices in the pass, round the base of which the angler must try his casts.

In desolate regions like this, where the silence is only interrupted by the hoarse croak of the raven, or some other equally wild inhabitant of the mountains, the slightest sound, which otherwise might pass unheeded, will often arrest the attention. Such was the case with me on my first excursion to Lochan Rest.

While screwing together my fishing-rod, I heard a low and peculiar whistle from the precipice above. Fancying it might be some shepherd, I took little notice; but as the same strange call was repeated at intervals during the whole time I was fishing, my curiosity was somewhat excited: I strained my eyes along the crags in every direction, but nothing was to be seen.

A few days after, I again slung my fishing-basket on my shoulder for Lochan Rest, and I must confess that the invisible tenant of the cliff had some share in attracting me back so soon. Scarcely had I wet my line when I heard the mysterious whistle, which continued as before until I left the loch. I tried to ascertain the exact spot from whence the sound proceeded, but was only the more baffled, as I had no doubt it was from a perpendicular and totally inaccessible rock. At last I became so accustomed to it, that I should as soon have expected to miss the trout from the loch as this wild note from the hill.

Summer was now advancing, and several engagements prevented my returning to the lochan during my residence in the neighbourhood; but about the same season, two years after, when showing a friend some of our Highland scenery, amongst other places I took him to Glencroe, and, in walking past the little loch, I almost started when I heard the well-remembered whistle! I had before given up hope of

finding out the cause, and it had even occurred to me that it might possibly be some echo occasioned by the wind among the rocks. With this absurd solution I was fain to rest satisfied; and it was some years after, when passing a steep and craggy hill in Perthshire, that the true one was discovered. A small bird flew out before me, and, perching on a detached piece of rock, struck up its wild peculiar note. It was the Spirit of Glencroe! With cautious steps I wound round the crag to get a nearer view of the bird, when I caught sight of its white breast, and, immediately detecting the *rock-ousel*, felt sorry that my charm was dissolved.

I had once or twice in spring met with this bird on the moors, but had never heard it make any call beyond a harsh grating chirp.

This little incident gave rise to the following stanzas, which I may be excused for inserting:—

The heather-bell was blooming fair,
And gaily waved the yellow broom,
And many a wild-flower bright and rare
Lent to the breeze its choice perfume.

But lonely, lonely was the scene,—
Grim rose the heights of dark Glencroe,
And, though the sunbeam smiled between,
They scarce returned a kindlier glow.

Above me frowned the jutting rock,
The wimpling burn beside me played;
Around me stared the mountain flock,
And asked—"Who dared their rights invade?"

A whistle strikes my startled ear!
A pipe of shrillest, wildest tone;
But human footstep, far or near,
None could I see—I stood alone!

Still and anon, with every breeze,
I caught that sound so strangely wild;
And who may tell what visions please
The wayward mood of Fancy's child!

Oft I returned, when skies were fair,
To ply my fisher's task below,
And long the viewless tenant there
I named the Spirit of Glencroe!

Once more this thrilling call I heard,
As far I climbed the misty hill;
Then past me flew a little bird,
With that same note, so wild and shrill!

Spirit I deemed it long,—and still,
With its white breast and airy form,
It sat like spirit of the hill,
Above the cloud, and mist, and storm!

There is a stone which marks Glencroe,
To weary travellers known the best;
It bids them, ere they farther go,
Tarry a while by Lochan Rest.

Hast *thou* no message, herald lone,
Perched on thy lofty turret brow?
"Rest and be thankful," says the stone,
Bird of the rocks! what sayest *thou?*

"Rest to the weary—rest for men—
Through earth's dark pass worn wand'rers they—
Rest is the Spirit of our Glen,
But ah! that rest lies far away!

"'Tis far away! 'tis far away!
Above my watch-tower lift your eyes;
Rest, weary wand'rers, rest ye may,
But rest *not* till you reach the skies!"

A SPRING WEEK IN THE WEST HIGHLANDS.

1848.

THE lark, with his song of glee, and the lapwings, as they wheeled about, tumbling and chasing each other, with their vernal scream of ecstasy, had given some cheerfulness to the dull sown fields of the Lothians, when a short tour was recommended for the health of my youngest child. I had seen enough of the lovely glen which separates the Holy Loch from Loch Eck, in my shooting and fishing excursions, to make me long to penetrate farther; so, with the hearty concurrence of my fellow-travellers, it was to this inlet of the West Highlands that we directed our course.

An easy steam passage brought us to Kilmun, and next morning we skirted the Echaig,[1] which, like

[1] I had this salmon-stream, and the shooting of Kilmun hills, taken from Mr Campbell of Monzie. In addition to salmon and grilse, the river abounds with sea-trout: I have killed forty in about

a band of silver, unites the two lochs. Every object here was familiar. M'Erle's pool, famous for a stray grilse; Ouig Hill, appropriately pronounced *wig* by the natives, from its rough long heather; and Rashfield shielings, with their thatched roofs and smoky "kipples," where the peat-fuel gives a pleasant notice to the traveller that for once he is getting out of the reach of carbonic influence. With most of the inmates of these poor dwellings we were also well acquainted; and among them we could place on record examples both of worth and happiness.

At a little distance, but only far enough to keep up his credit as a lone man, was the cell of the Hermit of the Glen. A less interesting specimen of this genus of mortals could scarcely be imagined. He seemed to have courted solitude only for its notoriety; and, instead of the anchorite's "crystal well," drank freely and constantly of "*mountain-dew*."

This jovial recluse laid claim to the attention of all strangers; and, after repeated invitations, I once had the curiosity with some friends to visit the "wee place," as he calls his hut. His methods of making

six hours. Thews and sinews are required to travel the moor. It is a sort of peninsula, jutting out between Loch Long and the Holy Loch, on which account scarcely a bird escapes the boundary. The grouse are pretty regularly distributed, and, with really good dogs, no man need return dissatisfied. At the beginning of the season, when the tops of the hills are the best range, the eye rests upon views singularly bold and varied. For the first few weeks I generally averaged from twelve to eighteen brace a-day, besides hares and snipe. The woodcock-shooting is the best in Cowal.

us understand that guests were expected to leave some donation behind them, as a trifling memento of the pleasure their company had given, were certainly ingenious enough; and after gaining his point, he in his turn volunteered to treat us with "The Braes of Balquhidder." And really it was worth a trifle, for he managed what I had supposed to be an impossibility—viz., to deprive the beautiful air and words of every vestige of harmony. But his grand recipe for drawing the purse-strings is practised upon his female visitors, and consists in enumerating the moneyed dames who were dying to share his eight feet by six cabin—but they "never gaed near his heart," placing his hand most pathetically on the spot where that organ should have been! This stale trick, I was credibly informed, had maintained in full radiance his salamander of a nose for some thirty years.

Like many anticipated pleasures, the unknown half of our day's journey did not come up to expectation. The rugged grandeur at the lower end of the glen soon blended into low hills and copses; but the drive along Loch Fyne is certainly very beautiful. We slept at Inverary; and next day, after admiring the waterfall in Glenara, and walking up all the steep braes for the sake of the views, arrived at Dalmally.

Having despatched a messenger to the Black Mount to ascertain whether the sea-eagle had built in any of the forest lochs, we stepped out as far as the little

rustic bridge to enjoy the soft pure air. A well-known twitter greeted us, and there was the first swallow darting under the old arch of the primitive bridge, his steel-blue back glancing in the setting sun. "Two of them!" shouted my eldest urchin, who, for great diligence in Greek and Latin, had been allowed to accompany us,—"they *do* make a summer."

A car, containing two anglers and their attendants, now drove up. They had been fishing since morning at the Falls of the Orchy, and had taken a couple of salmon—one nine, the other fifteen and a half pounds weight. The captor of the large fish was in great glee; for the landlord told me it was the "biggest" that had been caught since the season began. The weather had been so dry, and our time so limited, that my salmon-rod and tackle had been voted supernumerary. I should now have had no objection to their company, especially as next day, being a festival of the English Church, and all the fishers being Englishmen, I should have had all the river to myself.

The swallows were true prophets; next day was mild and calm, with a few clouds. After breakfast I walked to the cottage of one of the old fishing-guides to borrow a rod, reel, and flies. "The river is so small, and the wind in so bad an *airt*, that unless it changes you would not get a rise," said old James M'Nicol. Seeing me rather incredulous, he added, "I will come down at one o'clock, and should the wind change, we *may* get a fish." The wind had been in the same

"airt" for the last week, and well did sly James know it would not change. The truth was, both he and the other old guide had been hired by the Sassenachs, and dared not go out, or even lend a rod or fly, as they of course wished to give the river a day's rest. I was not, therefore, surprised when M'Nicol made his appearance at one, with the excuse that he had to tie some small flies for Mr ——. Opposition only put me upon my mettle. I borrowed an old rod from the waiter, while the landlord, by some secret influence, procured three of the most approved salmon-flies, and engaged to send a post-boy who knew the casts.

Being thus pretty well equipped, I started about three for the Falls of the Orchy. My boy—no contemptible bait-fisher for trout—begged hard to accompany me, as he had never seen a salmon killed.

At the tail of the lowest pool I had the good hap to hook a fish. As I was far from placing implicit reliance on the waiter's tackle, it took some time to tame him; and when I fairly had him under my thumb, where was the gaff? The beach, however, was good, and the post-boy handy, so we soon extracted a very fine eleven-pound salmon. The next pool was a long, black, whirling linn, but we fished it blank; not a break or boil from top to bottom. We now came to a dangerous but very good cast. It was also deep and black, full of sunk rocks; and, should I hook a fish, it would soon show what the

tackle was made of. At the very spot where I expected, up he came; and now was the tug of war—the fish fighting for the rocks, and I doing my best to keep him clear of them, knowing that if he effected his purpose there was every chance of being cut. My tackle proved excellent; I fairly foiled him, and at last wore him away from the perilous rocks. The post-boy's hands again acted gaff, and brought to the bank a noble fifteen-pounder.

I was now quite satisfied, and despatched the ready-handed son of the whip for our car, which was put up opposite the place where I killed the first fish. At the very foot of this pool part of the stream flows near the opposite bank. More for the sake of instructing my boy in the mystery of throwing a long line than with any sanguine hopes of a rise, I swept my fly twice over this bit of water. At the second throw up came a famous fellow. He turned his head down stream, and dashed along, making my reel ring. There was now a race different ways—my son for the post-boy, and I with the fish. Jehu came up puffing like a grampus, ready to grip his prey. He soon saw that his services would not be required for some time, as the salmon was fresh and strong, and making beautiful play. Patience and caution at length brought the fish to the bank; and for the first time the post-boy, after having a firm hold, lost it from the strength of the salmon. It was a little while ere I could bring him within reach again, for the fright gave him fresh

vigour; but the clutch at the root of the tail was more sure next time, and we landed the finest fish as yet taken in the Orchy since the season opened—sixteen pounds. I had both hooked and killed every fish I rose, and with the same fly.

Here let me caution gentlemen to be neither too sanguine nor dispirited by the fishing-guide's prognostications of success or failure from the weather. When you have good sport, they are sure to say the day is all that can be wished. If, on the contrary, you don't stir a fin, they will as certainly console you with some flaw in the wind, water, or sky, how propitious soever they all may have been. Catch them telling the angler (what is more often than not the true cause) that it is his own want of skill. The greatest bungler may more easily catch a salmon than one of these chaps make such a mistake.

Wild and uncouth were the exclamations and comments from a circle of Highlanders, when the salmon were paraded before the inn; and truly absurd was the edification depicted in my little fellow's features, as he stared from one rugged weather-beaten face to another, severally delivering themselves of their Gaelic sentiments.

The cuckoo is a bird of bad omen if heard for the first time before you break your fast. So said some mountain sage to my little boy, who was unfortunately in that predicament. You are sure to fail in whatever you undertake immediately after; in other words,

have "a gowk's errand." Nevertheless the unlucky gowk had brought us a fragrant morning, or more likely the fine morning had tempted the *mal-apropos* call from the joyous bird. A note from Peter Robertson was handed to me. The sea-eagle had built upon the island of Loch Bah, but was shy and not sitting close yet. "It is all that nasty cuckoo," said my son. "Had you heard *it* in place of seeing the swallows, you would never have hooked the salmon."

There is often more earnest in these "saws" than grown people would be willing to admit. I have known a deer-stalker[1] refuse to go out, on a fine morning for the sport, if he saw a mouse on his kitchen floor at early dawn and *was unable to kill it*. The same man was confident of success should a cat jump out of a bush before him *when on his way to the hill*. He affirms that he never saw either omen fail. This man, from the braes of Atholl, for some years conducted a flourishing trade in Edinburgh, was a capital clear-headed man of business, and continued till his death quite as superstitious as when he left the glens. When the victims are ready prepared, the victimisers will never be wanting. There

[1] Like most Highland poachers, he had two strings to his bow, and followed the lawful calling of a shoemaker, to conceal as much as possible his depredations on the hills. He told me he had killed thirteen deer before breakfast-time. When after grouse, he never wasted powder and shot upon ptarmigan, as they only fetched two shillings a brace then, whereas grouse brought three and sixpence. The ptarmigan were so plentiful in the forest, that he assured me a fair shot might have bagged ten brace in a few hours.

was a woman in Morayshire who used to sell, for a guinea, a bottle of spring-water as a charm against all diseases (if her remedy got a *fair* trial, it might have done more good than she thought or intended); and after my account of the deer-slaying cobbler, no one will be surprised to hear that she had no lack of customers. Respectable people, often from a great distance, paid (to her) very profitable visits. She was proud of being the lineal descendant of a race of witches, and her grandfather was acknowledged the most potent wizard of the district. From him she inherited the much-boasted possession of "the river-horse's bridle" and "the mermaid's stone," which powerful spells she exhibited as proofs of her weird origin and descent.

In defiance of the boding cuckoo, I ordered out our vehicle for Inveroran. No votary of nature can follow the windings of this lovely strath of the Orchy without deep interest. The road runs parallel to the river nearly the whole way, and by a little observation, one can scarcely fail to catch a passing glance at many of the creatures that frequent these lonely wilds. An alpine hare, now of a mottled blue and grey, scuttled along the road before us for a considerable distance. She fortunately did not cross it—that *would* have been a clincher to the cuckoo! A roebuck was browsing upon the shoots of the birch and hazel bushes that fringe the river, not fifty yards off. He only stared at the carriage and "dandered" up

the opposite hill. And now the dark outline of Bendora rose before us, whose slate-coloured crags add greatly both to the gloom and grandeur of the forest.

Arrived at Inveroran, there was the characteristic sight of a fine herd of the mountain deer, greedily feeding a little below the crest of the near hill, upon the young sweet grass which had sprung up upon a long stretch of burnt heather. The telescope was soon brought to bear upon them, and some fine harts were singled out. By the time we had dined, they had fed down to the adjacent knolls.

At break of day the landlord's son and tax-cart were at the door of the inn to convey us part of the way to Loch Bah. Peter Robertson was all ready to jump in, when we passed the handsome new forest-lodge where he had taken up his abode. We halted our cart at the nearest point to the loch, and cut across on foot through the heathery morass. A few redshanks, like well-set-up sentries, were stalking upon the mossy banks at the water's edge, and a stray one occasionally took a short flight from one little tarn to another, piping its desert cry; while numbers of curlews serenaded us from the clouds with their pleasing mournful scream.

When we had picked our steps through this boggy ground, Loch Bah burst upon our view, and the eyrie itself was just discernible upon the birch-tree in the islet. Peter's glass was fixed, and the bird soon distinguished upon the nest. About half a mile from

the islet, and close to us, was the shallop, which we were in the act of launching, when a sound, something between a "squeal" and a whistle, rose and died away upon the still solitude. I had never heard anything like it before so singularly plaintive. It had something of the modulated whistle of the buzzard or the kite, but was far more sweet, soft, and musical, so fitted to the scenery and the place. It seemed to rise in a low cadence from the shore, and then melt into the clear air. "That's the otter," quoth Peter; "I've heerd them say he gie's a whustle sometimes." It was soon apparent that he had guessed right, for the "whustle" came next time from the loch, and a gentle break, followed by its circles, showed where the otter had popped up its head, after swimming under water from the shore.

A difficult channel we had to steer through on our way to the islet; and although we changed our land pilot into a water one, and placed him in the bow to boot, our skiff was frequently bumped, and once nearly lifted clear of the water by the numerous sunk rocks.

All sitting birds face the wind, to prevent its ruffling their feathers; so, knowing where the eagle's head would be, we attempted to come in behind her. But when we got half-way, she flew off her eyrie and sat upon a tree, her white tail shining like the silver moon. We were all watching her when the other also flew off the nest and settled near his mate. This did not look well for a shot—the hen evidently

was not sitting. When we neared the islet, they both flew out to meet us, uttering their shrill scream. Sometimes they floated at an immense height, and then, cleaving the air in their descent, flew round their eyrie, beating with their wings, which made a hoarse growling noise, like (forgive the comparison) the paddles of a steamboat at a distance on a calm day.

Peter's great anxiety was to get me hidden as quickly as possible; and a speedy job we made of it. I had hardly time to notice the terror of some deer springing into the water to paddle across to the mainland, like Robinson Crusoe's savages, before I was ensconced under a heather and bracken screen. A small aperture was made for my gun-barrel, and from seven o'clock till one I was left alone on the island.

Meantime my companions rowed away to the far end of the loch, and having found a wild duck's nest full of fresh eggs, and kindled a fire, they soon, with the addition of our basket of provisions, turned out a most comfortable breakfast. The excitement of the moment quite kept down *my* hunger. Every time I heard an uproar among the small black-headed gulls, I was sure the royal pair were approaching; and soon their shadow passed over my ambush. They were generally swimming slowly, at a great height, and seldom came near the nest tree. Once or twice I heard the hollow rumbling, and they dashed past at the distance of sixty yards: but had I wished to take

this random chance, it was impossible, as I only commanded the eyrie tree.

The intervals of their visits became longer every time. Once a pert kestrel lighted upon a twig only a few yards from the mouth of my gun. Shortly after, its mate perched upon the same branch, and both began to preen their wings without the slightest suspicion that their dreaded foe was closely watching all their motions.

At last the female eagle returned alone. She soon took her departure, and we saw neither of them any more. Whether the sun glancing upon my gun-barrel had scared them, or the skiff upon the loch, we were unable to decide. There was not above half a foot of the barrel visible; but the eagle is of all birds the most wary, and nothing can elude its eye.

When Peter felt sure the game was up, he returned to release me from my watch. I consoled myself with a hearty breakfast and his assurances that we should manage better next year, if we were spared, by allowing the bird to sit hard before disturbing her. Had this been the case now, I should certainly have had a fair shot.

I examined carefully the erne's nest. It was very deep as well as round. There could not have been less than a cartload of large sticks and twigs. I had some curiosity to know whether both birds built in company, or if the male acted "cad" by bringing the materials, while the female was the architect. Swans

are very gallant in this particular, supplying their mates with aquatic plants and reeds, while these sit comfortably on the nest and weave its sides. The male eagle, however, would have a far harder task. I once, with much interest, noticed a pair of bald-coots, on Duddingston Loch, constructing their damp abode. The male supplied his mate with the leaves of the water-lily, and the female came to the side of the nest to receive his billful, laying it along in a neat methodical way like a building mason.

A delicious afternoon enabled us to equally enjoy our return drive down the banks of the Orchy. The gorcocks, in the full pride of their scarlet combs, strutted often within pistol-shot of the carriage; and at the foot of the strath, the larches which grew upon the river's bank had their customary complement of black-game, perched as usual near the top, and busily engaged in nipping the young shoots. Within a short distance of the inn at Dalmally, a brace of partridges were picking up the corn just sown by the landlord. The noise of our vehicle made them take wing. Immediately, an impudent sparrow-hawk struck one down. I did not see the deed done, but our driver turned round, and with great animation pointed out the bush where the wounded partridge lay. The little assassin was beating a retreat, but left ample proof of his guilt in a shower of stolen feathers which streamed from him as he flew. He would be certain to return to his prey, and might easily have been trapped. No

greater proof of the dire havoc hawks commit among game can be adduced, than the fact that they refuse everything they *don't* hunt down themselves; while, on the contrary, no birds are easier trapped, even at a stale bait, than kites and buzzards.

Once, and only once, I noticed a hen-harrier devouring what she had no hand, or rather foot, in killing. On Lennie Moor I wounded a grouse, and marked the spot where it towered and fell. The scent was bad, and my dogs could not find it. Two days after I was ranging the same ground, and a female hen-harrier rose out of the heather. She was giving the last polishing to the bones of my grouse. It is probable she might have noticed the bird fall, as hawks are very quick in detecting disabled prey. I have seen them single out the wounded bird from a pack, and stick to it closely. Upon one occasion a hawk made a desperate charge at a grouse I had actually knocked down, neglecting several others which rose at the same moment. I gave him an uncomfortable salute with my second barrel.

Next day was the last of our Highland trip, and my boy begged hard to be allowed to dedicate a couple of hours to the pike at Kilchurn.[1] He had caught his bait before breakfast, and borrowed a pike-tackle, the waiter's old rod, and a small rickety reel

[1] The three best places on the loch for pike are—Kilchurn, at the head; Port and Sherry Bay, half-way down, where the pike generally run large; and, best of all, the "Foord" at the foot.

with *ten yards of very rotten line.* We walked down to the castle of Kilchurn, which is surrounded by a shallow reach of water, a sort of enclosed bay from Loch Awe, full of large pike. A boat is a great advantage here, where sunk banks and feeding-grounds abound in every direction, as in many of the shallower Highland lochs. We soon hooked a large pike, which ran out our morsel of a line, and then snapped it. He most likely found as little trouble in disgorging the hooks as in breaking the line, which the following fact may show, of which I can vouch for the truth.

A Thames fisherman hooked a large "jack" when spinning at a mill-tail for trout. Not having a disgorger at hand, he cut the line and threw the pike into a tub of water, to keep it alive and fresh for sale the following day. To his amazement next morning, the creature had managed to cast up the eight-hook tackle, which was lying in the tub.

The two following instances of the pike's voracity are almost incredible, but both I can also certify. In the spring of 1841, two pike of twelve pounds weight were cast upon Loch Vennachar shore, each with a hold of the other's jaws, and quite dead. The second instance happened in Suffolk. A jack of only two pounds was found choked in attempting to swallow another of a pound and a half. The gentleman who saw them taken out, only a short time before, told me the fact.

But even these instances are equalled by the solemn

toothless cod. A friend of mine was trolling in Loch Long, and hooked a seithe. An enormous cod seized the seithe, and paid the penalty by being brought into the boat himself. His girth seemed unnaturally large, and, upon opening him, a brown paper packet of sandwiches, enough for luncheon to a pretty large party, was taken out. They could not have been less injured, mustard and all, had the cod's stomach been a sandwich-box.

Having no more pike-tackle, we contented ourselves, before joining the carriage which was to convey us to Inverary, with a view of the old castle, now very tottery and dangerous to ascend. Numerous daws were rejoicing in the holes and cavities. The osprey's nest formerly graced a high pinnacle, the owners having an abundant supply of food wherever they chose to seek it. Sea-trout of a large size I have several times seen in the water-eagle's nest; but seldom pike, and never flesh of any kind.

A gamekeeper wantonly shot the last of these beautiful birds that tenanted Kilchurn's turrets, and none have replaced them. I was delighted, however, when trolling Loch Awe in the summer of 1850, twice to meet with a solitary osprey, probably the widower of Kilchurn Castle.

Having some arrangements to make at my summer quarters on Loch Awe about the middle of May 1850, I received a message from my friend Peter Robertson

of the Black Mount, the purport of which was, that as the sea-eagle had been sitting hard for some time, he hoped there was little risk of a disappointment like my last. Next evening I arrived at his house. The moon in her crescent, a little shaded by dappled clouds, was casting her pale glow upon the untroubled waters of the forest, tempting us to steal a night-march, in order to surprise the eyrie by break of day. The fragrant air of the mountains made the spirit rebound, and a slight touch of adventure gave zest to the whole. There was just sufficient light when we neared the islet to distinguish the two eagles winging their way to the mainland. Both lighted down near the shore, and eyed our proceedings with an indifferent bearing. It was plain enough the nest had been harried. With discomfited mien, the forester ascended the tree only to confirm what we felt sure of before. "I ken wha has served us this trick," said Peter, setting his telescope for a last look at our quarry on the shore. "He has swam in at nicht, the scoondrel, and ta'en the eggs or young for fear o' his lambs. Mony a time he has swam Loch Rannoch in the nicht-time *to see his lass.*" Upon inquiry, I found that this daring fellow had, night after night, braved the winds and waves of that stormy loch, re-enacting upon the solitudes of Rannoch the far-sung feat of the Hellespont. It naturally struck me, was his barefooted Scotch lassie worthy of such a courtship? Does she, now a Highland dame,

feel a secret pride when, sitting at her cottage door on a summer evening, she catches a glimpse of the serene surface of her native loch? Or when the winter storm has raised the white wave, and the snowdrift has sent her stalwart shepherd to the hill, does she breathe the silent prayer of a thankful heart to the Preserver of his days when their love was young? With such thoughts, I scarcely felt disappointment at the termination of my delicious night-walk; and, when I considered the many night-*swims* the shepherd had taken for it, I felt glad that he had gained *his prize*, though he had lost me mine.

THE HILL POACHER.

AN English poacher is generally to be found among the very dregs of the people—a hardened, unscrupulous blackguard, who would shoot the gamekeeper with greater pleasure than he would a pheasant, who fears nothing but detection, and whose conscience would never sting him till on his deathbed. Scotch poachers are a different class of men. To be thieves, drunkards, and, if need be, murderers, is not a *necessary* feature in their character. And although they are in general not the most reputable part of society, yet many, especially in the Highlands, stand pretty fair with their neighbours. The cause of this difference is easily traced. In England the ground is far more easily preserved, and the keepers much better trained; therefore no man need attempt the destruction of game, unless he is prepared to run all risks of a deadly skirmish with the watchers. Indeed there would be few poachers in England, were it not

for the great abundance of what may be termed *tame game.* But the temptations to netting, snaring, ginning pheasants at perch, or smoking them by means of brimstone, are so great, that the poachers traffic with the game-shops to an enormous extent.

To be a good shot, or to understand anything of sporting, is not of much consequence to the English poacher, his method of securing game being a good deal like robbing a hen-roost or a rabbit-warren. These men generally poach in company, their numbers being regulated by the party of watchers they expect to be on the look-out. The gang, often half drunk, sally forth from some low beer-shop whenever the night is clear and starry. If there are many hares or rabbits in the preserve, they take some mute curs to drive them about, after having set the snares. The fowling-piece, though always carried, in case of an encounter, is seldom used upon game—except, perhaps, with a quarter of a charge, to knock down pheasants at roost, within pistol-shot. This makes little noise, but, of course, they prefer making none. It is well known, when they do resort to this method, that, by beginning at the lowest bough, they may nearly clear the tree. But, should they stupidly shoot the top bird first, the others are very apt to fly off when it comes rustling past them. They have various other methods of quietly destroying game, some of which are practised even in broad daylight. It is seldom, however, that love of sport can be urged in their

defence, as these depredations are exactly akin to gipsy thefts, and have little of the excitement caused by the love of hunting, so natural to man. It is easy to see that none but desperate characters would engage in such a life. By constantly herding and drinking together, they corrupt each other more; and, by living in continual apprehension, and determining to brave the worst, they learn to set no value on human life, especially that of a gamekeeper.

Scotch poachers may be divided into Highland and Lowland. The latter class more nearly approximate to their brethren in England, especially those in the neighbourhood of large towns—viz., they poach in company, have no pleasure in the sport, and care only for the profit. The deer on the islands of Loch Lomond were sometimes killed by printers from the Leven works, who, coming in boats, took their booty away with them to sell to the Glasgow poulterers. The foresters had not unfrequently to fire on the boats to keep them off. On one occasion, a party effected a landing upon the Duke of Montrose's deer island, and, having slain one animal and wounded another, were surprised by the forester and his friends. They all, except one, managed to get back to their boat, leaving the deer behind. When the unfortunate printer saw his friends row off, he managed to hide himself, and could not be discovered. The forester (a gallant Graeme) took measures to prevent his escape by immediately securing his own boat, and shotting his rifles. A perfect

hurricane of wind most opportunely set in for several days, and prevented the gang, without imminent risk of life, from returning at night. During the day, the forester took his station on a point that commanded a view of the whole island, and, when a boat's crew appeared, ran down to meet them. The printers often attempted to land; but, as soon as they approached the shore, he fired ball at them, and manfully kept them at bay for three days. On the fourth morning, the half-starved wretch came to the lodge, and delivered himself up.

In remote situations, however, the Lowland poacher often engages in the pursuit of game with the same zest as a gentleman piques himself upon the excellence of some half-bred cur of a dog, and astonishes his acquaintance by bouncing anecdotes of his wonderful gun. In such out-of-the-way places an amateur like this has often considerable opportunity for indulging his love of sport. Scotch gamekeepers (unlike gardeners) are not to be compared to those of England. A great proportion of them have been poachers themselves, and turning them into gamekeepers is not a sovereign specific against their old propensities. Many know literally nothing of their business but how to shoot in a bungling manner; and, provided the master is not much of a sportsman himself, and sees game now and then upon his table, he makes few inquiries about the dogs, vermin, poachers, &c. The consequence is, that the single game-*killer*, not *keeper*,

troubles himself as little about these *unimportant* particulars, and goes lounging about with his badge of dignity (*i.e.*, his gun) summer and winter, occasionally bringing home some game; while the sly poacher, and slyer vermin, are welcome to the overplus for anything he cares! The poacher, therefore, not only has the free run of the shooting-ground by night, but makes it his business to find out when the gamekeeper is despatched upon an errand, and takes a snug rap at the partridges or pheasants by day. At night, he sets snares for hares, and I am sorry to say that the English method of doing this in the middle of the fields has come into general use. He also shoots the pheasants at roost during moonlight; and, if the single Argus of the night should happen to be sound asleep close to the scene of carnage, he makes as much despatch as possible, covering the birds where killed with grass or leaves, and marking the place. He then runs to his cottage, the door of which has been left open in case of pursuit, and quietly picks up his game at any good opportunity. An old hand, when showing me the casts on the Clyde, said that he had one night killed a dozen pheasants from the public road, over the Duke of ——'s park-wall, marking the wall with a piece of chalk where each bird fell, and secured every one next day by jumping the wall, and depositing them in a sack, which he said was full of *potatoes*.

When such was the common system of game-preserving in Scotland, no wonder that the great propor-

tion of our Lowland shooting was not very first-rate, and that the poachers did not much trouble themselves with the English methods of netting the fields, &c., which would not then have been profitable. They are often men who have a regular trade to trust to, and only engage in poaching as a recreation and a "sma' help."

But the most sporting poacher is the Highlander.[1] His chief objects are grouse, black-game, and deer; and, as he dares not show his face on the moors while they are crowded with sportsmen, at the beginning of the season, he generally waits till the gentlemen "hae had their wull o't." The birds are then wild and strong, and can only be killed by means of traps or the gun. Comparatively few are taken by the trap, so the poacher trusts to his skill in eluding the watchers, if there are any, and sallies forth with his dog and gun, in full enjoyment of the sport. Many of these poachers are fair shots, and some even can boast a fairish dog. But generally speaking, their dog is none of the best—often only a collie or a terrier, taught to make an apology for a point. The dog's deficiencies, however, are amply made up for by his master's knowledge of the habits of the birds, of the

[1] Before the gangs of smugglers were broken up, the Highland poacher was a much more desperate character. All these smugglers were poachers, and as regardless scoundrels as could be met with. Now, however, in place of little patches of barley on all the Highland crofts, good oats are substituted; and not a twinkling fire, on the darkest night, is to be seen on the islands of our lochs. We may thank the excise laws.

places where they are likely to be found, as well as to pitch after their flight. Indeed, I should have no hesitation in backing one of these fellows to procure more *fair* shots, at this time, with his single mongrel, than many of our sporting gentlemen with the best couple of pointers or setters they may possess. But they seldom shoot in *good style*, except at deer; and the best of them, though thought paragons in the neighbourhood, and boasting that, "gie them a bottle o' whisky in their pocket, they will walk and shoot against ony man in the kingdom," are as inferior to good shots among gentlemen, as they are superior in every other requisite for grouse-shooting. The reason of this is plain enough. The poacher refuses "crank" uncertain shots, hence he seldom excels in them; and, as the birds are always wild and difficult of access when his operations begin, all his ingenuity is exerted to get within easy distance, and, no matter whether sitting or flying, to bag *as many birds with as few shots as possible.*

Many a capital shot, who has left the moors for the low grounds, under the idea that grouse are unapproachable, would be thoroughly astonished if he put himself under the implicit guidance of one of these men. Indeed, most sportsmen, however expert with the fowling-piece, and however much they may pique themselves upon their skill in all the details of the sport, scarcely know its first principles, as they leave the moors just when the thorough bass is to be begun.

The tricks of the Highland poacher are manifold and ingenious. He can always form a shrewd guess as to what distance the report of his gun may be heard at any dreaded point, and, if possible, he contrives to get a hillock between, in order to intercept the sound. Indeed, I have known them shoot for days *before the moors opened;* and, by such management, as well as by taking advantage of the wind, not a report was heard by the watchers. But, should they be discovered, they seldom offer other resistance than leg-bail, which is very often taken, as the poacher's wind and knowledge of the country are, generally, at least equal to those of his pursuer.

A knowing hill poacher may in this way destroy far more game than the gentleman who has preceded him over the same ground, although enjoying every advantage of dogs, season, and opportunity; and, unless opposed by skilful and determined watchers, may escape detection for years. But when the head-keeper is an active, honest, and clear-headed man—above all, *if he is well supported by his master*—it is rarely that the poacher can pursue his trade long. The first thing the keeper does, upon taking charge of a large Highland estate, is to make himself acquainted with the names, persons, and places of abode of all the noted poachers within reach; for, although he may often be troubled with others from a distance, yet those on the spot do the most mischief. He then selects his watchers with great care;

if possible, *men from a distance*, and well known to himself. These watchers are all provided with a telescope and pistol. They are expected, in a very short time, to know the gait and manner of every poacher within their own bounds. They soon become wonderfully expert, with the help of their glass, and, even when they have never had the opportunity of seeing the poacher face to face, will distinguish him with certainty by his mode of walking. Should any of the watchers turn out lazy, faint-hearted, or stupid, his place is immediately supplied by another.

As soon as the head-keeper has drilled his recruits into a perfect knowledge of their duty, he commences operations in good earnest. He always has a spy to watch the house of the poacher he means to entrap, and thus knows all his movements.[1] Should he detect him on the ground, he takes care to have one of the best-winded assistants to intercept at this point, before giving chase. This is even more necessary when looking after a night poacher. The watchers are as knowing as the poacher in regard to

[1] A common but somewhat stale trick of the Highland poachers, is to conceal the barrel of their gun down the leg of their trousers, carrying the stock either in the inside coat-pocket, or wrapping it in a plaid. The watchers at once detect a man thus hampered, and always look upon him with suspicion if he has his plaid round him. Many of them, therefore, leave their gun at the nearest bothy to the ground. This avails them little, as the watchers know well enough that when the poacher leaves his house at a suspicious time, or bends his steps in a suspicious direction, the instrument of death will turn up, as if by magic.

wind, always keeping to leeward of their beat, and taking advantage of all the hills that give them a far look-out, where the report of a gun would be most apt to reach them.

With the advantage of a thoroughly-trained head-keeper, and the expense only of the day's wages of a few watchers, most Highland properties might be kept comparatively safe from poachers, who would very soon cease to molest them. These men, if resolutely seized, will seldom make determined resistance; for although many of them, from motives of policy, think it necessary to talk big, in order to deter farmers and shepherds from coming near them, yet I have known many of those gallant talkers the first to show the white feather. One great black hulk, of six feet two, who infested my father's moors before they were strictly preserved, endeavoured, very unsuccessfully, to spread the terror of his name, for he was several times found out to be the most arrant craven. But, indeed, the race of Highland poachers, be their pluck ever so good, have no wish to engage in more serious offences; and whenever a gentleman sets about protecting in good earnest, they abandon his shooting-ground as hopeless.

To hunt a steady dog with a lantern tied round its neck is a most deadly way of night-netting, and the more so, as dark and rough weather are no obstacles to success. When the light *points*, two men come round with the net in front, and draw it over the

dog, frequently securing a whole covey of partridges huddled together within a few inches of his nose. Fortunately, however, this wholesale destruction can only take place where the keepers are most supine. When they are alert, it would be next to impossible for poachers to hunt many fields and not be betrayed by this *ignis fatuus;* and when once the dodging lantern *is* seen, no marauders could be more easily captured. Neither hares nor pheasants are in any danger from this mode of netting, as the former always move about at night, and the latter roost in trees.

As to snaring, which is oftener practised either at night or during divine service, every trained keeper, by looking the runs both in the fields and fences, will easily know whether snares have been fixed in them. He then comes quietly at the time when he thinks they will be set, puts a rabbit or hare into one of them, and places a watch. Many people fancy this method of taking game the most difficult of detection; but, with efficient keepers, the snarer is, perhaps, the most easily secured of all poachers.

A curious snaring story was told me by a gamekeeper in Morayshire. He and his son perceived evident marks of snares for rabbits on the open sanddowns, but all their ingenuity could not detect the culprit. He watched at night, and all proper times, but there was no appearance of any one coming near the place. At last, one of them saw a woman appar-

ently doing some farm-work in broad day. His suspicions were not much roused until he took out his telescope, and, not being able to find out what she was at, he determined to ascertain. After a little manœuvring, they surprised her in the very fact. She had several snares set, which she always took care to do in the middle of the day, taking them up in the evening. No one ever suspected her, and the keeper declared they were the neatest snares he had ever seen. Some years ago I caught two equally absurd poachers. Returning home from shooting one evening, my dog was caught in a snare. I immediately fixed one of the rabbits I had shot in the dog's predicament, and set a watch. No one came near the snare until next day, when two little fellows, about ten years old, made their appearance, and, as soon as they had pounced on the rabbit, were pounded themselves.

Every Highland district is infested by its own set of poachers, more or less, according to circumstances. There is a family likeness in most of these biped vermin, which is easily accounted for by the manner in which they spend their life. For the most part they have an active walk, a quick eye, and long sight—all very necessary accomplishments for a hill poacher, and much improved by constant use. Their expression is generally shy and repulsive, and strangely belies their free step and almost graceful bearing. Of the many dozens I have seen and conversed with, few have been distinguished by any other characteristics.

Two exceptions to this general rule occur to me, and both, though very different from each other, were no ordinary men.

When I first knew Gregor More of Callander, his poaching days were over, for he had a mortal disease upon him, from having lain out in the fields one cold night when intoxicated. He still managed to saunter down the river, and to give those beautiful sweeps with his line and salmon-fly which were the admiration of the whole clachan. He engaged to show me the casts the first time I fished the Teith; but, from the character I had heard of him, I was not prepared to be prepossessed by his appearance. Drunkard, poacher, outlaw (for he had been outlawed for non-appearance after thrashing several fellows in some broil), I expected a mixture of cunning and ferocity, and had my doubts whether he would play me fair in pointing out the river. At a little distance, a tall, respectably-dressed man, with his plaid slung over his shoulder, and a little terrier dog at his foot, seemed shaping his course towards me. When he approached, he looked me full in the face, took off his oilskin-cap, and made a respectful bow. I had appointed Gregor to meet me a little farther down, and now thought, can this possibly be the man? He at once put me out of doubt by remarking upon a few flies round my hat, that they were too light for "oor water," but one or two might do. I looked at him with some curiosity: a nobler specimen of manhood I

had never beheld. Upwards of six feet high, of the finest herculean proportions, and straight as an arrow, he seemed equally formed for activity and strength. There was nothing mean or sneaking about his manner. His face was open and manly; and despite the sad discipline to which he had exposed both mind and body, he had not effaced the natural and sure marks of force and truth from his countenance. Although wan and emaciated, there was a coolness, a will to dare, in his eye, backed by his tremendous shoulders and still powerful frame, that I could not look at him without thinking on the words, "majestic though in ruins."

I had now no more qualms about Gregor's sincerity —and well and faithfully did he repay my confidence, —so well, that he gained the ill-will of many of the Callander fishers. One ungainly little bullet of a fellow especially, who gloried in a pair of fat stumps which he called "tight legs," and the bust of a man double his length, was particularly indignant that Gregor should have shown all the good casts, "which a man micht hae ta'en lang eneuch to fin' oot for himsel'." Gregor told him at once that he would also guide me along the opposite side, whenever it was my "pleeshur to go."

But Gregor was equally knowing among the passes of the red deer as in the haunts of the salmon. It was alleged against him by the foresters that he "kent" every favoured track as well as themselves. He was

also a first-rate marksman with a ball, and generally carried off the prize at the St Fillan's games. When talking to him, it was impossible not to be struck with the point of what he said; and his superiority in these sports no doubt lay, in his bringing to bear upon them the full weight of his original mind.

It was a constant remark in summer, that, whenever you "kent whusky on Gregor," you might be sure he had taken a salmon. To eat his fish was, to say the least, improvident, as providing no supply when the fishing was over and he was unable to work.—But to drink them! Alas for poor Gregor in the winter! Want, of course, came then, and I was apprised of his destitute circumstances. I sent a man on whom I could rely to procure him food; but upon no account to give him the money to spend for himself. About the New Year, however, when whisky is free, Gregor and another man quarrelled about some flies, which the former had agreed to dress. Every one said that the man behaved shamefully, considering that Gregor's hands were in a manner tied. He set up "an awfu' tongue," till at last Gregor's blood boiled, and he chased him out of the house into the village. The constables apprehended Gregor; he was tried, and sentenced to be transported. But, poor fellow! his shattered frame pined in the confinement of a jail. He soon broke completely down when deprived of the fresh air on the banks of his own Teith; and, before the time for his embarkation

arrived, he was summoned to take a longer voyage, and to a country from which he should never return.[1]

Very unlike Gregor More was —— ——. Strange to say, he had once been a "placed minister of the Kirk" (answering to a beneficed clergyman); and, although he often returned late on the Saturday night, after being all the week poaching the deer, his sermons were both clever and popular. I met him once when traversing a wild range of hills, and was impressed both with his general information and the courtesy of his address. He had much to say, and said it well; yet, notwithstanding the blandness of his manners, you could not help feeling that interest or passion was the mainspring of all his actions; and as for principle, he would inwardly sneer at the very name. He was an athletic, handsome man; but his expression, though bold and confident, was selfish and wily. The following anecdotes are capital illustrations of his character.

He had shot a deer in a very out-of-the-way recess among the hills. While comfortably seated upon his quarry, enjoying a pinch of snuff in all the luxury of success, an intrusive face, followed by a gun,

[1] To my shame and sorrow I record it—I did not see poor Gregor in his prison. It was eleven miles distant, and, though I always meant to visit him, I never did. The remembrance has often grieved me. May this be a lesson to all who read it, "Never to put off till to-morrow what ought to be done to-day."

poked over the adjoining dyke.[1] "Leave that deer, or I'll blow your harns aboot your lugs." —— had neglected to reload his rifle; so, without a moment's hesitation, he shouldered it, and paced slowly up the glen. As soon as he got a knoll between him and the unceremonious stranger, he loaded as quickly as possible—took a long circuit, and came down behind the identical treacherous dyke. Quickly showing the same startling apparition of a face and rifle, he commanded his rival instantly to take himself off, *but to leave his gun.* The man was in the act of "gralloching"[2] the deer, and at once saw there was nothing for it but to obey. —— kept the gun for some time, and often said, had the man asked for a bit of the deer as a favour, he would have been welcome to a side of the venison, as the other was all he needed; and, indeed, the stranger's assistance in conveying it was of far more consequence at that time than half of the deer.

The next adventure of this worthy licentiate is a melancholy one. He and a friend, equally partial to a bit of fat venison, had agreed upon a night expedition, for the purpose of stealing a deer. They were rather at a loss for a driver; so, partly by threats and partly by persuasion, they almost forced a young shepherd to accompany them. Their guns were loaded with "swan post," to make sure work; and they were each placed under the ridge of the hill, to command

[1] Stone wall without lime. [2] Cleaning out.

the sky-line, and thus have the deer between them and the light. The shepherd appeared on the ridge, and, extending both his arms above his head, as a signal that the deer were coming below, was mistaken by —— for a stag's head and horns, and shot dead on the spot. Quickly perceiving his mistake, he rushed up, and, carrying the dead man upon his shoulders, he pitched him over the adjoining precipice, and made his companion take an oath that he would never divulge the secret. The Highlanders are a quick-witted people, however; and it was whispered that there was a little round hole in the shepherd's bonnet, which corresponded with another in his forehead, that was never made by a dash against the rocks. Some time after, the minister's *quondam* friend let out, in his cups, the above particulars. But few care to deny that the "puir lad's" death was occasioned by a false step over the ravine, and the night wind still howls round his lonely cairn at the foot of the rocks.

THOMAS A'THING AND THE POACHER.

Among the Scottish peasantry, one very often meets with what is called "a character." Traits of individuality, whether personal or national, are more apt to be rubbed off among the trading ranks, their outward deportment and speech being so much borrowed from each other.

The Scotch peasant, feeling himself perfectly independent of every one, except his laird, is not very lavish of his courtesy towards strangers. Indeed, his manner is often far more surly than he intends; but whatever civility he does yield is pretty sure to come from the heart. Any one accustomed to speak much with these people must be very unlucky if he does not often meet with something original; and the following is barely an average specimen of what may be expected.

Thomas A'thing (all things) was a native of Perthshire, and when very young came to settle upon my father's estate. He had a code of honesty which, I have heard it pretty broadly asserted, was a convenient one for himself, as he allowed no law or licence except to No. 1, while his uncompromising conduct to Nos. 2, 3, and 4, gained him many enemies, as well as my father's protection. But, after a few threats from his neighbours of "pittin' the bodie i' the loch," he was left to take his own course. Thomas's face was no bad index to his temper—a long drooping nose and peaked chin, small fixed eyes, and thick heavy eyelids. In stature he was much below the middle height, and his very walk, *like Venus's*, made known the man. It was neither fast nor slow, and seemed to say, "I'll no neglec' my business; but for a' that, there's nae thrift in a hurry."

The avocations of Thomas A'thing, as his title

imports, were manifold. He could turn his hand to most things, without being very skilful at any. Mason, plumber, painter, glazier, rat and mole catcher, vermin-killer, with many other et-ceteras, were crafts that came all alike to Thomas; but, from his love of natural history, the latter pursuits were more congenial to his taste. A chat with Thomas on these subjects was a sure specific against the spleen, and, if his conclusions were often wrong, he sometimes related from his own observation facts both curious and interesting. In winter he was always employed as one of the game-watchers; and although he used openly to admit he was "nae great soger," yet he often showed more pluck than those who pretended they were.

Thomas returned one morning from the islands with a prisoner in the stern of his boat, and his quaint grave relation of the particulars, in presence of his captive, was truly comical. He had with his enormous telescope discovered four Leven printers poaching flappers. They had lighted a fire, and begun to cook some of their spoil. He rowed to the other side of the island, and then, winding round, got between them and their boat. He then cocked his pistol, and, like another Robinson Crusoe, dashed, single-handed, into the midst of the four. They all sprang to their legs and ran different ways; but Thomas, choosing out the man who took the least direct line to their boat, endeavoured to cut him off from his companions. The

fellow, however, had good wind, and by sundry doubles managed to reach the shore where the boat *was*. But his faithful allies, thinking it prudent to throw a sop to this terrible Cerberus, had left their companion and pulled away. The printer's heart now completely failed; so, wading into the water, like the stag at bay, he awaited his pursuer's approach. Thomas, with his pistol still on full cock, and *carefully selecting* the nearest point on the shore, took deadly aim, and commanded him instantly to surrender. The fellow, now fancying that death was staring him in the face, fell down on his knees *in the water*, and begged for mercy. This was granted him, on condition of immediately shipping himself on board Thomas's craft. He then uncocked and replaced his formidable weapon, which, he afterwards told me, *had never been loaded!*

But it was only in calm clear weather that trespassers had anything to fear from Thomas's prowess. He had a perfect horror of winds and waves, and would not trust his "frail bark" upon the loch in a storm for any guerdon that could be offered him. We had been after wild swans one day, when unfortunately the wind rose a little. He became so paralysed with terror as to be useless at the oar, so we placed him at the helm. His great object then was to steer in for the shore, so that we were in continual danger of being stranded on some sunken rock. We ordered him peremptorily to put out a little, when he answered in a perfect agony, "Gentlemen, gentlemen, I'll gang

up as high as ever ye like, but oh! keep me frae the water." In justice to Thomas, I must say that I have seen him in a situation on the roof of a house, which I would not have exchanged with him for a good deal.

Thomas had a great opinion of his own powers of reasoning. He would not succumb even to the minister, certainly not to the schoolmaster; but he had always tact enough not to get beyond his depth, and, if driven to give an opinion on any point where he was not quite sure, he generally evaded the difficulty by saying, "Weel, gentlemen, ye maun jist consult yer ain raison." There was at these times a grotesque assumption of dignity, as he measured out his reply; and, indeed, at all times an air of innate pomposity, that prevented one from addressing him otherwise than by his full designation, however tempted by wind or distance to call out "*Tom.*" As to his wardrobe, it was certainly not very smart, with the exception of an old weather-beaten tarpaulin, which was rather gaudy than becoming. He always gave it a fresh coat of paint to keep out the November rain, when he was painting a door or rail, so that it constantly changed from yellow to pea-green, and from pea-green to sky-blue. Thomas meanwhile changed little himself. He was philosopher enough to be contented with his lot, thoroughly enjoying his book on a winter evening; the more so if it "trated on nateral history." He continued to plod on his way; and even John Sly,

who had the reputation of being a wag, and was a tailor to boot, whose quick grey eye looked as if winking at the sun, to take the shine even *out of him*, ceased to exchange a banter, having often found to his cost that there was more point and sarcasm in Thomas's wisdom than in his wit.

THE NATURAL HISTORY OF SPORT.

NOTES ON HAUNTS AND HABITS.

WHEN the classic chronicler of Selborne first heard of the Alpine hare, he expressed great satisfaction at being able to add another animal to the scanty list of British quadrupeds; and certainly, our four-footed creatures bear small proportion to the feathered "million" which crowd the moors and morasses, the rugged sea-coasts and inland lochs, scattered over the length and breadth of the land, from the rich fertile plains to the bald peaks of the most inaccessible mountains.

In the remarks which I am about to make on some of the birds and animals of the British Islands, it must be understood that I lay no claim to the title of a scientific naturalist. I begin by saying that I know nothing of their anatomy, am by no means perfect in their classification and arrangement, but there are few who have had greater opportunities of studying their habits and modes of life.

When reading the works of eminent naturalists, and especially the graphic accounts they give of the wild creatures in their native fastnesses, it soon occurred to me that such materials *must* have been furnished by observers who had not been so faithful to *their* library; "that wild men of the field, those mighty hunters," must have acted as purveyors to the lion of the desk. Well, here was a track opened up for me, and I followed it with all my heart.

A passing glimpse at the wilder and more interesting British animals is every year becoming less common, since the cultivation of moorlands, thorough draining, tree-planting, &c., has, in many districts, driven away the aboriginal beasts of prey from haunts where they have prowled for centuries, and replaced them by tamer and more sociable races, which follow in the wake of man, their great pioneer.

In "the buried past" the shadow of a rugged waste rises before my mind's eye, as one of the unexplored remnants of primeval nature untouched since the Flood. It was full of treacherous swamps, with here and there a granite boulder nearly hidden by heather four feet high. Frequently, strayed cattle or horses were drowned in these morasses; for when they got entangled in the mazes of this *terra incognita*, to track them was dangerous as well as difficult, with little chance of finding the truants until they were stark and stiff, half buried in the rotten fen. Impervious jungles of whin or broom guarded this undisturbed

chaos, in spring adorning its outskirts with a perfect blaze of gold, and making even more secure such a stronghold of predatory animals as man seldom cared to invade.

When a schoolboy, I remember how often the hen-roosts were plundered by pine-martens or wild-cats, which nightly crept forth from this sanctuary, and the superstitious awe with which I listened in the calm twilight of summer to the cry of the tiger-cat to its fellow, but whether of affection or defiance it never struck me to speculate.

For years this "habitation" of wild beasts has been swept away as if it had never been. Yellow corn has waved over it—deer or sheep have browsed on it—the larger beasts of prey have fled to the mountains, and are succeeded by the polecat and squirrel, the rabbit and weasel, even by the ignoble Norway rat; and the whole is transformed into a baronial drive, rivalling the stately parks of "merrie England."

The change, call it if you will improvement, which the last half-century has effected in the general features of Scotland, by the reclamation of waste lands, the draining of morasses, the planting even of mountains, is a wonderful testimony to the energy and perseverance of its people. As an old sportsman, however, I protest that some of our best fishing-rivers have been ruined, our wild sport curtailed, and our very climate modified, or rather equalised, by these same labours of the improver. As the Indians fled

before the white settlers, the remnants of our nobler predatory animals have sought refuge among remote Highland wilds, but they find little security even there. Every far-away mountain and every rugged moor are sought out and set apart exclusively for grouse or deer. Keepers and watchers have been commissioned to destroy the "vermin," and this command they execute by exterminating as many as possible of our rarer and most interesting beasts and birds of prey; so that the eagle, the peregrine, the kite, and marten, the wild-cat and mountain-fox, are fast receding into the remoter parts of the Scottish Highlands to make way for such real vermin as rabbits and droves of pheasants, which afford no better sport than barn-door fowls. The original police having been thus got rid of, a few good grouse-breeding years are now quite enough on the reduced and yearly diminishing heather area to upset the balance of Nature, who soon takes the law into her own hands, and by a pestilence effectually prevents such an offence for at least several years to come.

Although all our leading beasts of prey[1] will pro-

[1] As a set off against the decrease of our four-footed fauna, news has been sent me of a new Scotch animal, found in Banffshire, called the earth-hound or earth-hund. Till within the last two years I never heard of such a creature. It was described to me as larger than a rat, having a greyhound's head and a short tail. My imformant stated that one could be easily secured at the autumn ploughing season, which would be forwarded to me at once. Four autumn and winter ploughings are come and gone, and yet no earth-hound has arrived! I begged to be told of any museum where it was preserved,

bably, at no distant date, become extinct, yet chief among them the mountain-fox may most likely be the last to disappear. In the first place, from his swiftness and strength he can gather subsistence scattered over an immense tract of country; and when food fails on the higher grounds, he can make a raid on the low lands during the long wintry nights, returning again to shelter with his booty ere the day dawns. Next, the great increase of alpine hares on the mountains, and the gradual but steady introduction of rabbits into many remote ranges, affords the hill-fox a favourite meal with but little trouble in securing it. Lastly, of all beasts of prey sly Reynard is the most difficult to trap.

My late father once employed a gamekeeper, who professed himself an adept at fox-trapping, to destroy some in the near woods. After a fortnight's trial the trapper assured his master that he could pass his word there were none in the coverts. Next day we ordered the traps to be lifted, took passes, and uncoupled a stanch old hound. She picked up a track at once,

or to be referred to any one who possessed a stuffed specimen of the animal, but in vain. What was Tom Edward about if there were such a creature in his own county, and no notice taken of it in his 'Life'? This is inserted that any naturalist, *who is able*, may unearth this mysterious hound.

When a turnip is found to have been penetrated through a small hole three-quarters of an inch or an inch in diameter, and the inside to have been completely scooped out until sometimes nothing is left but the bare rind, the earth-hound is credited with the damage. This is only too common a phenomenon in any field of turnips. *Query.*—Is the field-mouse the living embodiment of this spectral earth-hound?

and I was so fortunate as to shoot a fine bitch-fox. A short time after a very large male was slain by the same means. When, however, "the fox-hunter" and his motley pack attempt fairly to run him down on his native mountains, it is only on rare occasions that they succeed.

Naturalists are divided in opinion whether the mountain-fox is a distinct species from the smaller variety of the Lowlands. At all events, each is adapted to the ground he haunts, whether hill or plain. The Highland fox has much longer legs, and being more slim and graceful, can travel rough precipitous places with greater ease than his shorter-limbed, more compact Lowland cousin. But it is a notable fact that the latter on flat ground has more endurance and better wind before fast hounds. This has been often proved by litters of the hill-fox being sent to fox-hunting districts, and every advantage given by rearing them in game preserves until full grown and strong. They, however, almost always made such poor runs that the experiment was given up. Place a cur fox against a hill one for a race on mountains, and "the tables are turned," as the points of the mountaineer would then tell sorely against the lowlander. It would be like matching a Lowland pedestrian against a Highland shepherd.

Martens and wild-cats are easy to deceive with a bait. Indeed, both are so greedy and fearless as to rush into the snare for a piece of raw meat. Neither

have speed enough to hold out long before a swift plucky terrier, but are quickly "treed" or run to ground. Should they take refuge in a hole or cleft of the rock, they are not difficult to bolt by smoke; but if they prove stubborn, a neatly-set trap will most likely secure them after nightfall. No wonder, then, that these interesting carnivora have vanished from the greater part of even the Scottish hill districts, and that a tourist may now explore two-thirds of the Highlands, and far from seeing either of them, will find from the natives that there are none to be seen!

In the remote straths and glens I have often noticed how many of the hill shepherd's cats were dingy grey, barred on the sides by rusty brown. No doubt these were descended from wild-cats, formerly so rife in all mountain districts, whose gallantry and prowess no house Tom of the neighbourhood dared to test.

Although I have searched many Southern museums, and made minute inquiries of my English friends, I have never yet verified a true English wild-cat. Sassenach martens I have certified, and well remember one trapped on the Cumberland hills. It has been often asserted that there are two varieties of marten, one frequenting beech-trees and the other pines; an orange breast and light-brown fur being the distinctive marks of a beech-marten, while a dark coat and white choker is the characteristic costume of the dweller among sombre pines. I have always, however, remarked that females had the orange tint and light-

coloured fur, the males being larger, with nearly black bodies and white necks. At any rate, the orange and white throated martens breed together in their wild state, for a small female orange and large male white throat were the last martens trapped in Dumbartonshire, on the banks of Loch Lomond. Both were captured the same night in March, and at the same bait—sufficient proof that they were paired and consorting together. They were stuffed and put up in the same case.

Martens are as active and graceful among trees as squirrels. They are perfectly pure in the coat, having a pleasant aromatic scent like green pinewood. Their nature is very cruel. Unlike the fox, who quietly murders the largest goose or turkey he can lay tooth on, and then stealthily sneaks of with it, the marten massacres a whole hen-roost before eating—its thirst for blood being stronger than the cravings of hunger.

Beasts of prey from the New World might have become indigenous here, had they not at once been exterminated. In an Irish preserve a few years ago, a footmark, unknown to the keeper, was detected in a large tangled covert under his charge. He also noted that the stranger fed greedily on rabbits, from the remains of this prey being scattered all over the beat. Baiting his traps with the interloper's chosen food, he planted them in the runs most likely to attract its notice. A large raccoon was next morning caught; but the footmarks and rabbit-slaughter still continuing,

he had again the triumph of securing its mate. The pair had escaped from a strolling menagerie, and if let alone, might have given Green Erin an interesting addition to its four-footed fauna; and "treeing a 'coon" might have become as fashionable a pastime in Ireland as in Canada.

There are some outward points of resemblance between martens and polecats or foumarts, but the nature and habits of the creatures are very different. Foumarts have neither the quick eye nor the agility of martens. The former have the power of emitting a fetid smell like the American skunk; but whether, like skunks, this bad odour is used as a means of defence, or is only an involuntary consequence of fear or anger, it is impossible to decide. Whenever a polecat is attacked, the air for some distance around is poisoned by the effluvia, although when undetected you might pass within a yard of the skulker and never wind him. Dark ferrets exactly resemble foumarts, only they are smaller and of lighter shade. Sluggish in their movements and near-sighted, foumarts keep much in hiding during the day. They are not very careful in their choice of a refuge; an old wall, a bing of large loose stones, a rabbit or rat hole, especially among tree-roots, quite contents them. At night they wander farther distances for prey than, from their lazy action, one could imagine possible. It is, however, their rule to return home every morning.

While hare-shooting in my early days, a terrier-dog jumping a stone dyke, suddenly paused on the top, sprang back, and then began to bark furiously at the foot of the wall. After removing a few stones, a foumart's nose disputed further progress. Of course his brains were blown out by an eager schoolboy. The same dog soon after found another, also in a loose wall. This time, I managed to pull down so much of the dyke as to permit old "Lowry" to grip his game. Both were large males.

Not far from these rough dykes on the following spring, our terriers opened at a huge heap of stones. With much labour we removed them, and under the last massive boulder was a female polecat, with three young ones nearly full grown. The only food was the remains of several large yellow frogs. This frog-paddock (as White calls them) is a favourite sustenance of the polecat; and, still more difficult to credit, eels are often found among his food-store. How he catches *them* I have some curiosity to know. Yarrel says that eels slide like serpents from one drain to another over the dewy grass. If so, the difficulty ends, for the foumart's instinct would soon teach it to watch for the land progress of the slimy prey.

Foumarts seldom hunt during the day, and when they do attempt it I imagine they are not very successful. On one occasion, when a party of shooters had taken their passes for roe, the next gun to me had his attention completely fixed by the antics of a foumart try-

ing to inveigle an old black-cock. The polecat by strange vagaries arrested the notice of the old cock, and endeavoured to sidle up to him. Whenever he got too intimate, the wary bird stepped forward also, and then watched his facetious would-be friend. At last the polecat, quite foiled, sneaked away. It is but justice to these wild ferrets to own that they are very light on feathered game, and much prefer reptiles, small rodents, or rabbits when they are numerous.

Most wild creatures will fly even at man in defence of their young; but, except when the maternal instinct is stirred, or their retreat barred, there is none which dares or even wishes to be man's aggressor. The sluggish foumart, having no confidence in its powers of escape when the sheltering burrow is not near, may be easily driven to desperation. I have seen one, far from turning tail, boldly rush at a Highland fox-hunter's pack, and fight fiercely to the last.

Two other well-authenticated instances of polecats assailing giant odds I can also vouch for. In one case, a lady was attacked by three young ones and their mother, being forced to defend herself with a garden-spade. In the other, a woman was filling her apron with firewood, when a foumart sprang from among the heap into her apron, which she instantly tucked round him, and ran to her husband, who easily slew the enemy. These creatures were no doubt surprised, and, despairing of their lives by flight, felt that their only chance was to fight for them.

Of all our wild creatures, otters are the most generally distributed over the British Islands. From the still, "drumly" waters of the south, to the pellucid northern tarn cradled among rocks, wherever fish abound their amphibious foe thrives on them. You may mark his doleful whistle from the shingle of a desolate moor-lochan, or see his black head rise among the sedgy reaches of an English river, and yet associate his presence as equally pleasing and appropriate to both. But when a salmon-shoal quits the brine to rush up the swollen stream, like wolves of Thibet hanging on a troop of wild horses, otters dog their watery drove with equal or even more bloodthirsty eagerness. When salmon are so plentiful, their persecutor is apt only to devour some of the tit-bits, leaving the rest of the carcass to rot on the shore. I have seen, when duck-shooting, several large salmon killed near the spawning-beds on the same night, which were thankfully taken possession of to kipper by the cottars of the neighbourhood.

Otters and martens make pleasant pets. The latter has a very pure skin, is fond of the hand that feeds it, but, like the squirrel, becomes too frolicsome if at liberty in a room. A tame otter is quite as affectionate, less mischievous, and, when taught to fish for its owner, can be useful too. A collar is put round its neck, to which a cord held by the master is attached, when the creature is allowed its swing. On approaching water you mean to fish, it winds the

stream from a distance, and strains the leash to reach the fishing-ground. Its mode of working is peculiar, which can be traced by the air-bubbles and also by the string. When trouting, an otter works under the bank of either side, seldom trying mid-stream, ever and anon rising with a trout, which is taken from it, and the chase continued. Enough being caught, the captor has his collar loosened, and may eat his fill.

As the Lowland fox has his season of rest, in like manner otters are entitled to protection in all their hunting districts during the breeding time. They also lead a very cunning and secluded life, so their decrease has not been so marked as some of those members of the footed fauna which I have just pointed out. Otter-stamps ought to be set loose, in order to allow the creature when caught at its landing-point to waddle back again into the water, and be sunk by the iron weight, to rise no more alive. A long line attached to the trap, with a cork at the other end, points out the spot where the otter lies drowned. But should the trap be tethered to the shore, the captive pipes its mournful call, struggling to be free; and from the leg being so thick and oily, it not unfrequently manages to escape. A celebrated vermin-killer told me that he was not afraid to grip by the neck an unhurt fox, wild-cat, marten, or badger; but that a full-grown otter, from its girth of throat, and slippery skin, would be next to impossible to hold.

The wary tact of otters, when dogs touch on their

drag in a mountain-burn, I have frequently had opportunity to test. As soon as the terrier opens, the otter quits the stream and wriggles away for the nearest loch or burrow within reach; and although its pace is so slow, it seldom fails, by good generalship, to make sure its retreat. I shot one found by my terriers in a hill-brook, when within twenty yards of plunging into its native loch. The dogs must have been close to their game at the start; but sly dodging had placed two hundred yards between them when I intercepted the leader and ended the race.

Sea-otters are generally of larger size, and more light in colour, than those whose hunting is confined to fresh water. The storm-beaten rocks of the Hebrides and the savage Irish coast, are chosen resorts of these enormous water-prowlers. When my eldest son was sea-fishing round the rocks of Skibbereen, one of these monsters twice rose within ten yards of his boat. Its fur was such light grey as to give it the appearance of a white otter, and was by far the largest specimen he had ever seen. When his regiment was quartered inland, a bog-trotter offered to place him on the banks of a stream where he would be pretty certain of a shot at an otter the first moonlight night. He had been about two hours on the watch, when a slight break on the water above warned him to be ready. Scarcely perceptible, the swimmer was gliding rapidly and silently to the fishing-pools beneath, when he fired and killed it.

So long as fish were in the lower deeps, this otter came down stream every night for food, returning by land to its shelter at break of day.

No officious gamekeeper has any title to molest the discreet and respected badger, whose harmless, monotonous life gives him no pretext to cut it short. My earliest memory recalls a colony of badgers, whose weird-like underground homes were always regarded in the daytime with awe, which deepened into fear as the shadows of evening closed. My infant mind used to brood over the grim tenants beneath, and fancied them ogres whose business was to devour children straying in the gloaming near the yawning mouths of their buried citadel. As I grew into a schoolboy, and observed in spring these earths trigly cleaned out, and in autumn quantities of moss rooted up, which the cowherd assured me was the "brocks making their winter hay," fear gave place to curiosity, which soon rose to interest.

At this time, a sporting footman, who had been brought up on the establishment of a celebrated master of hounds, was engaged by my father, and this lad was my first tutor in the art of venery. He proposed that my elder brother and I should purloin three traps from the old gamekeeper, which he undertook to set that evening. I well remember with what care we chose those holes which bore freshest marks of their industrious tenants, and the early start to test the success of our selection. The first two

traps were untouched, but the third held fast one of those lovers of darkness and mystery which had so often fired my imagination.

Badgers dwell chiefly in colonies. They live grossly at harvest-time, and so become plump as fed-up pigs. Lying torpid, as brown bears do, during the severity of winter, their high condition is completely reduced by early spring; and when they rouse up from the winter sleep, they are at least as light and lean as they were fat and unwieldy when they entered on it. We once noticed, on the verge of a long avenue, at least half-a-dozen wasps' hives rooted out, the comb scattered, and the grubs eaten up. On trying some near dry drains with terriers, we found and dug out a huge male badger, who, no doubt, had done this good service. After hospitably entertaining him for some weeks with his share of the kennel-dog's supper, he was restored to liberty, and given free cartel to storm all the wasps' strongholds his appetite prompted him to search out.

A frequent pastime was to dig out these animals, and the labyrinth of intersecting underground passages was so ingenious, as often to baffle the most persevering wielders of spade and mattock. I remember the complaint of a lazy gillie, when, after several hours' tearing labour, we at last unearthed and "sacked" our grizzly quarry, that it "needed cast-metal men and steel picks for siclike wark." When the females have young, the litter is reared in a circular, hard, dry,

roomy lodge near the end of the burrow. There is always a very narrow entrance to this nursery, which the mother can hold against the most determined assailant.

Each rocky cairn capping the Glenfalloch range of the Grampians has its family of badgers. They seem to prosper on the foggy ptarmigan-ground immediately beyond the heather, with its grouse. Like their father before them, my two youngest sons quietly trapped in October a most corpulent dog-badger, which I sent to the stuffer for preservation. His fat haunches inviting a trial of badger-hams, the traps were reset; and another specimen in equally good condition being captured, my eldest son had his hams cured after the most approved fashion, took them to England, and regaled a party of friends at breakfast with what he called "a lamb's ham." They pronounced it the sweetest they had ever tasted; so he appointed another breakfast, when the other ham met with equal acceptation.

My late uncle, once a middy in Lord Keith's squadron, used to tell a somewhat similar sea-story. Fresh provisions being very scarce in the fleet, the younger officers caught "the millers," as they dubbed the huge Norway rats fed among flour and meal sacks, and grilled them for supper. From such clean diet, these rats made nice tender food. Lord Keith, when he heard of it, gave out an order that the disgusting practice must be put an end to. Soon after

he dined at their mess, when "devilled millers" were served up as young rabbits. His lordship partook of the savoury dish; but when he found out the trick, the thought of his rabbits produced the same effect on the "old salt" as a chopping sea probably would on a landsman. Our bird-preserver in Edinburgh assures us that he finds eagles, foxes, martens, seals, &c. &c., good and wholesome meat; but always adds, "I canna come a wheesel (weasel)—thae beat me!"

Hedgehogs have considerable affinity to badgers in their choice of food and manner of seeking it—viz., rooting among grass, or in the earth like swine, for grubs, worms, beetles, &c., and always being most on the alert about nightfall. One great difference between them is, that the badger lives much under ground, and the hedgehog above. Sometimes the latter brings forth its little pigs in a rabbit-hole; but this is exceptional, for unless the burrow is a roomy one, the panoply of spears prevents a full-grown hedgehog from availing herself of an underground sanctuary; and indeed this coat of mail seems expressly given to it, to enable so sluggish and helpless an animal to dwell safely on the earth's surface, where, in an instant, it may transform itself into a ball of defence, capable of resisting every enemy but man. Their winter covert is always on the surface of the ground, often under an evergreen bush, where they lie tightly wrapped round by a very thick coating of grass, bracken, turnip-leaves, or whatever foggage they have been grubbing in when sur-

prised by the first cold nights. Sometimes three or four are rolled together in an enormous ball, but they sleep oftener in a single bed. From their partiality to eggs, they are very injurious to game in the spring months.

The only other winter sleepers of this country are dormice and bats. The first build a snug domed nest like a wren's, which I have occasionally found neatly fixed against the bole of a tree, and so aptly disguised with lichen from the tree-stem as to deceive all but a practised eye. Common bats sleep under the eaves or leads of old houses or barns, keeping themselves warm by huddling together in vast numbers. The great bat always chooses a hollow tree, where half-a-dozen are quite enough to keep up the temperature. There are none of these huge bats in Scotland; but sometimes when passing a hole in a decayed beech or elm in the south of England, a fetid smell betrays the odoriferous sluggards within.

Although but a child, I shall never forget the rueful face of a farm-man who informed my father of the first rat that had ever been known on the premises. No doubt myriads of mice were a nuisance, but in comparison with this new plague they seemed almost harmless. My curiosity to get a glimpse of the Norway intruder kept me continually sneaking about his haunts; and one quiet day, when all the workmen were absent, I heard a great rushing and squeaking among the mice, soon accounted for by the presence

of their giant persecutor, with a struggling mouse between his cannibal jaws.

As rats multiplied, mice grew scarce, until hardly any remained; but a still more noteworthy instance of the power and ferocity of this huge foreign rat was brought under my notice some years ago at a shooting-quarter I then rented. The lease was for three years; and when we took possession, the only representatives of the genus *mus* was a colony of aboriginals, which had never seen the face of a Norway invader. These old Scotch rats were very numerous, and by no means revolting; so we were often interested in watching their commonwealth, and, with the exception of one or two for our stuffed collection, had no wish to annoy or injure them. About the middle of our second year, one of my sons surprised us with the news that an army of horrid Norwegians had stormed and routed the natives, not one of the latter being now to be seen. Still more curious, the assailants made their attack in equal if not greater numbers than the enemy they surprised; and from the day of their victory till our lease closed, the Norway rat colony seemed neither to increase nor to diminish.

While fishing or spearing on the river Stinchar, in Ayrshire, our terriers forced from the hollow banks numbers of the Norway rat. They plumped into the stream and dived like the water species, often saving their lives by dexterous feats of aquatics. We speared many that escaped the dogs by a plucky

plunge. The black water-vole was formerly common in that river, but is now all but extinct. One of my sons had the good hap to spear a fine dark specimen, which completed my case of mice and rats. It is probable that the Norsemen have to answer for the scarcity of this pretty vole, but they had more trouble in extirpating a water than a land foe. I never met with water-shrews but in Sutherland, where we also procured one of these rarities in Inchnadamff burn.

The weasel tribe have increased immensely in Scotland during the last thirty years. Indeed, so surely as rabbits and rats flourish, the stoat follows in their train. On a late rented shooting of mine, where legions of rabbits, rats, and mice tempted them, all three varieties of weasel were equally rampant. The common weasel feeds much on *young* rabbits; but the mouse-killer, as its name imports, prefers field-mice to all other prey.

The ease and rapidity with which a new race, especially beasts of game, will swarm over a fresh district immediately on being introduced, every sportsman-naturalist can attest from his own observation. When a lad, I shot the first rabbit ever heard of on the Luss estates. To look at their numbers now, a young man of the present day might be excused for shaking an unbelieving head; and yet when I told some poaching labourers that the *then* novelty was in my game-bag, their incredulous silence spoke as plainly as words that "the callant had mista'en a

leveret for a rabbit." My triumph on opening the bag was therefore complete! I slew this rabbit with duck-shot, when after wild-fowl, my earliest and most favoured recreation.

My first sight of an alpine hare is quite as firmly fixed in my memory as this *avant-courier* of the conies. It happened on the first year I took out a game licence, when shooting over the rough and lonely Arrochar hills, followed by the finest type of a mountain poacher that either painter or poet could sketch. Alpan Macgregor was then in his prime. If the philabeg and sporran set off his splendid build and strikingly handsome face, he no less dignified and adorned "the garb of old Gaul." He was a self-taught and spirited piper, a first-rate mimic, and had an inexhaustible *répertoire* of racy stories, told so exquisitely that no one could repeat them without signal failure. His knowledge of hill-sport, and acquaintance with all savage creatures of the wilds, began in his childhood, and formed part of himself. My father had changed him from a game-destroyer into a game-preserver, and it was his fancy to adopt me as his *protégé*, being more proud of his boy-master's sporting feats than had they been his own.

After some severe grousing work round the bases of the Loch Sloy mountains, he proposed to vary the sport by scaling Ben Voirla for ptarmigan. This Grampian giant, fully as difficult to top as its neigh-

bour Ben Lomond, is crested by bald rocky cairns, interspersed with green patches of ptarmigan-weed.

Near the highest peak, among the scattered masses of granite, a large blue hare rose out of reach and cantered leisurely round the rocks. This was the first specimen I had as yet seen of that *lepus* family which has overrun most moor districts, and is the pest of many grouse-shooters' lives. At the date I now speak of (1822), I had shot over the whole rugged ground at the head of Loch Lomond without moving a single blue hare, barring the hermit on Ben Voirla's crags. How stands the case now? Like locusts they swarm on Glenfalloch and Corrynge, have descended in force on Arrochar and Glen Douglas, are numerous in Glen Luss and Glen Fruin, disputing possession with their red rivals even to the very verge of "the Highland line."

In the autumn of 1830, "a strange beast" was worried by my father's sheep-dog, after being stoned and chased from tree to tree by the excited urchins of the moorland school. Our old herd assured us that his collie's victim was "something like a wee fox, but as clever among trees as a marten." This poor squirrel, like other Saxon invaders, had paid by his life for his temerity in crossing the Celtic line. He was soon followed by others more fortunate, when a glimpse of these cheerful tree "foxes" was no novelty to the Loch Lomond peasants. They have steadily pressed northward, and as they frisk among

the larch-woods of Athole and Breadalbane, are better known to the Highlanders than the original owners of these solitudes, who have long made room for their more familiar successors.

NATURAL ADAPTATION OF COLOUR.

The mind of the sportsman-naturalist cannot fail to be deeply impressed by the protection afforded by the Creator, especially to gallinaceous birds, in assimilating their colour to the shades of the locality in which they find their food. Now the *Gallinæ* are not only emphatically the object of man's pursuit, but also the chief prey of rapacious birds and beasts. They begin at the cock of the wood or capercailzie, and go down to the diminutive quail.[1]

The cock of the wood is exactly the colour of the fir-trees on which he feeds and roosts. The shading on the breast is of the most delicate dark green. So is the quail of the autumn hay or grass field where

[1] When shooting in Ireland with a friend in 1865, my eldest son sprang three single quails, very wild; but as they plumped down after the first flight, and most likely did not run an inch, he could not find any of them a second time. With the aid of a very steady Irish setter he tried for them again in the evening; when having of course begun to feed, they were easily picked up one by one and transferred to his game-bag. He sent them to the best Dublin preserver of the time, and had a note from his daughter (a girl of 15) to say that her father was dead, but if he would intrust them to her, she thought she could give satisfaction. He agreed, and this case I consider the best stuffed in my collection—especially for positions.

it is most often found. Feeding on grass-seeds, it is seldom seen among corn of any kind, and its hue is therefore more sober and less yellow than that of the partridge. To exemplify my meaning, let us take the Highland mountain. The ptarmigan, in summer, is exactly the colour of the granite rock, and in winter changes to a white so pure that the test of the keenest eye is to detect it in its snowy retreat:—

> "Trained to the chase, his eagle eye,
> The ptarmigan in snow could spy."

Descend the first shoulder of the hill—the red-grouse cock is precisely the shade of the red-brown heather, while the partridge at the foot adapts himself to the patch of corn on the moor-edge; but this partridge haunts the heather as well, so his hue is darker than the true stubble bird of Norfolk and the Lothians; while the grouse of Renfrewshire, which feed all the autumn on the corn-stooks, are at that time so light in colour, as to be easily distinguished from their Highland kinsmen, who never leave the heather. The black-cock, indeed, may seem to be an exception, but his very shyness protects him; for it is well known to all sportsmen, that except in the rankest cover, he is the wildest of game-birds.

Wild doves would seem to contrast with the *Gallinæ*. Feeding on ground so varied, they must be chameleons if they would adapt themselves to all. Sometimes among the yellow corn, then in the dark bean-

field—now under the spreading beech devouring the kernels, or among the branches of an oak cropping the acorns, and, as winter wears on, forced to poach on the green turnip-tops. But notice how their very nature is a still better protection than any change of colour could be. Of timid heart and wary habit, the keenest eye and strongest wing, doves are the first to see danger, to "*flee away* and be at rest." Their swift pinions are also needed to bear them to their different and distant feeding-grounds.

The same explanation as that given for doves, may account for the bright colouring of male water-fowl, which are also very independent of hidling protection; while the females, who generally hatch their eggs on the bare ground, are excellent examples of my theory. When the mallard moults his wing-feathers, he is unable to fly for about a fortnight. At that time his plumage is precisely the sober brown of the female. As if aware of this fact, and also of his helpless condition on the water, he seeks to conceal himself inland among thick cover, and, until his wings are grown enough to fly, is as completely a hidling bird as the *Gallinæ*. So with the animals. If the mountain deer were white like a sheep, how difficult would it be for him to escape the hunter's ken; but his red-brown beautifully harmonises with the distant hill, when a little seared in autumn; while the ash-coloured roe, frequenting woods, fits in exactly with the boles and stems of trees. The same rule applies to the

white or mountain hare as to the ptarmigan,—in summer so exactly the colour of the blue-grey rock, that English sportsmen call them blue hares. Every one knows how difficult it is to find the common hare sitting in a stubble or lea field. Here I may make a passing remark, that whenever you meet the eye of any wild creature, that moment it makes off; instinct warning it that concealment is *now* vain.

Beasts of prey need this protection more than birds of prey, whose swift wings soon carry them beyond the reach of danger. The mountain-fox is much the colour of the red deer, frequenting the same open ground; the poultry-fox of the Lowlands is generally of a brighter red, but then he has the advantage of being able to conceal himself in thick cover, where, without showing himself, he is in the midst of his larder. The wild-cat, which lives and rears her young in the rocky cairns of the mountain-top, harmonises so exactly both with rock and hill, that the best mask of a shooting-dress is to copy a wild-cat's skin. The dark coat of the marten is the perfect shade of the dark pine-trees, among whose branches it passes the chief part of its life, often rearing its young in the magpie's nest,—hence it is called the pine-weasel.

The same merciful law descends to the fish of the waters. Every trout-angler knows that the fish taken from a loch where the bank is a peat-moss, are very dark; those where the bottom is yellow sand, are

quite gold-coloured; and those from a grassy shore, a rich green.

Suppose you have just landed a salmon of 21 pounds weight. Take a look at him: his back is fenced with tiny blue slates like the miniature roof of a house. Could any colour match more exactly the blue stones with which our rapid streams abound? We will suppose a lover of nature, but not an angler, wandering along the banks of one of our most picturesque rivers: an old seer is intently gazing over the moving waters; he asks, Why? The old man looks briskly up, and says, it is "a fish." No fish can the tourist spy, although shown the very spot where it rests. At last he thinks he has him, and points out a black stump as large as a grampus. The old fisherman darts up his quick grey eye with an expression of contempt; he sees further instruction useless. The stranger walks off, convinced the old man has been laughing at him. And yet there, all the while, is the spectre-fish, so completely the counterpart of the stone on which it has taken its stance, as to look like its shadow.

A most curious fact was some time ago communicated to me by one of Edinburgh's brightest ornaments, and who, like many many men of true genius, has a strong natural bent for angling. A question was proposed to a party of mathematicians: "Of what shape ought a solid body to be to pass through a fluid with the least possible resistance?" By application of the strictest mathematical principles it was solved,

and the form discovered coincided exactly with that of a fish's head!

I will now direct attention to the *Salmo ferox*. He is not formed for cutting through the rapids, like the arrow-shaped salmon, but his clumsy figure is well adapted for his still life of leisure among the weeds of Loch Awe, from which his colour, a greenish brown, renders him scarcely distinguishable.

One more, and a very remarkable instance, of this assimilation of colour. Rather more than fourteen years ago, there was a trout taken in the small stream of the Ury, in Aberdeenshire, very nearly 2 lb. in weight, one side of which was black, and the other yellow. The cause was evident. There had been a long drought, and the fish were forced into one small pool, close to the opposite bank of black soil, where the only deep current ran. The consequence was, that the exposed side was light, like the channel of the stream —the other black, the colour of the bank.

We now come down to the reptiles, and mark the same kind provision for them; and I am sure they need it. Observe the difference between two adders; the one in its green summer dress, the colour of the bracken and the grass—the other, taken in autumn, shaded like the withered bent among which it glides. Notice next a large lizard. He never changes, summer or autumn, and why? Because *his* feeding-ground cannot change. His colour, though taken in early spring, is sober brown—for

it is not among grass and leaves that *he* watches for his food, but upon planks and paling, where he basks through the long warm day to catch the flies that light on them. Last of all, look at the slow-worm. It is mostly found on gravel paths, and no hue could match it better.

ADAPTATION IN FORM.

I now come to the bodily adaptation of each creature to its own peculiar mode of life. Of course it will not be possible to notice more than some of the most prominent points, for the theme is so fruitful that I should be afraid of far overstepping my limit. I shall therefore select those groups which, from their remote or hidling habits, are least easily seen and studied. Water-birds first, passing over the whole family of cormorants and gulls. They are divided into *Grallidæ*, or waders—those who find their subsistence on the banks; and swimmers, which again admit of many subdivisions, each with its separate generic name.

The curlew lives on the sea-shore at low water; but, as the supply of soft food is too small, it has two strings to its bow, and at high tide it flies to the first swampy field, and sucks up worms like the woodcock. He seems to know the time of the ebb and flow by instinct, and let him be ever so far inland, pounces

down upon the shore at the right moment. It rears its young on the moors, where its wild cry and long bill have made it a bird of evil omen. The Scotch name "whaup" signifies a warlock or wizard; and the prayer, to be delivered from "lang-nebbed things" (witches being associated with long, thin, arched noses), invidiously points out the harmless curlew. From haunting fens and morasses, they are also unfortunately connected with the "Will-o'-the-wisp."

The oyster-catcher is also a coast-bird, but many of them in summer come up our rivers to rear their young. If possible, it always secures a bit of ground where the river divides, forming an islet, instinct warning it that it is there less likely to be disturbed. Its whistle, equally shrill and wild as the curlew's, is a harbinger of spring. The wedge-shaped bill can detach shell-fish from the rock, and open them with great ease. Its supply, unless in the most telling frosts, is therefore very abundant on the shore.

The little summer-snipe is well known as the constant visitant of our lochs and rivers, where, with his slender bill, he picks up insects among the gravel. The green-shanks and red-shanks, also sand-pipers, feed much in gravel, as their bills are harder than those of the knot, the dunlin, and sanderling. These last come a little nearer the water, and their bills being softer and more flexible, are better adapted to the sand. Their bills, however, are not so sentient as those of the snipe, so they feed a good deal by sight,

and not entirely by suction, like these birds. The snipe comes nearer the water still, and feeds entirely by suction in the mud; while the godwit goes beyond the snipe, feeding also by suction, in soft mire, sometimes even in the water itself. Those birds which live entirely by suction—*i.e.*, seek food by touch, and not by sight—are always night feeders. Most of this group are inland breeders, and there are no more finished actors when their nests are invaded. The *Gallinæ* are far too fussy and demonstrative. I was completely taken in by a sand-piper, when salmon-fishing years ago; it flew out from the bank, apparently so disabled as to drop in the middle of the Dee. With difficulty it struggled across among the weeds on the opposite bank. One of our party, however, found the nest, with four eggs. Next day the little creature was quietly seated on them, quite prepared for another sham. The woodcock, alone of the tribe, has no guile. I found a nest with four eggs, close to our avenue. She allowed us to look at her within a few yards, and in flying off never attempted deceit. She hatched three chicks, which ran from the nest as soon as they were out of the egg. The turnstone has a bill different from the other waders just mentioned. It is short and thick, and therefore not fitted, like the sharp, slender, soft ones of the others, for poking into clefts and crevices for its food. It has, however, the advantage in being able with its stout bill to turn up the stones which they cannot. Hence its

name. When a storm drives these coast-birds from the shore, they return as quickly as possible, expecting from the troubled waters an abundant supply.

The bittern and common heron are the only resident waders that feed *in* the water (for the godwit sucks food from the ground under the water), and their bills, especially that of the heron, approximate to the fishing diver's. The long bare shanks and fag-end of a tail allow of the deepest wading; while her neck, folded between her wings, and bill held straight over the water, enable her to strike with the greatest force and quickness. For hours she can remain in this posture, looking just like a point of grey rock, until a fish, attracted by her shining legs, ventures within reach. Quick as light, and with as much knowledge of refraction as the most finished leisterer, she never misses her aim, and is never taken unawares. When on wing, she rigs out a jury-tail with her stilts, thus preserving the balance her long neck requires. The bittern is now rare in Scotland, though at one time not uncommon. It is emphatically a bird of desolation. It subsists partly on fish, and partly on lizards, frogs, newts, and similar reptiles; its favourite resting-place a dingy fen, where the sun seldom shines. Unlike the heron, which is one of the wildest of birds, and only uses the mask of its grey cloak to delude its prey, the bittern trusts for its safety entirely to concealment: well may it do so, being the very colour of the swampy bogs it inhabits. Although so large a bird,

it may be within a yard of your feet without your seeing it. I have hitherto been unable to shoot a specimen.[1]

We have now brought the *Grallidæ* from the high gravel down to the water-edge, and even into the water, where the swimmers begin. The same harmonious law obtains with regard to them; the surface ducks beginning at the margin, where the waders leave off, to the deep diver, plying his vocation at the bottom of the waters.

The swimming-birds are divided into divers and dabblers. The former live by fishing, and have long sharp bills; the latter are those flat-billed ducks which subsist on grassy substances and aquatic insects: many of these, however, feed at the bottom, and are consequently divers too. Compare now a fishing diver and a diving dabbler. The round lumpy body of the dabbler, made to sink to the bottom like a stone, and graze there; and the arrow-shaped diver, formed to pursue its prey as deftly as if it were a fish itself.

We will now compare the finest specimens of both, which are purely ocean feeders—viz., the eider-duck, and the great northern diver; the former often feeds at an immense depth, while the latter can travel for

[1] It is noteworthy that a pair of bitterns have bred yearly from time immemorial on Lord Lifford's property at Mene Glas, county Donegal. They rear their young on a small lough, but, like ospreys in their castellated islands, the *original pair* only take possession of the sedgy recess when the season of incubation comes round. They are strictly preserved by their noble owner.

nearly a quarter of a mile under water without coming to the surface, and his swimming there equals the speed of many birds on wing.

The surface-feeding dabblers have bodies shaped like canoes. They are far lighter in weight, in proportion to their size, than diving dabblers. This is an advantage to both. I was much amused when lately visiting a very ingenious friend, to find that he had taken as models for a boat, the breast-bones of the mallard and teal, our most common surface-feeders. They feed on the margin, and trust to the waters washing up their supply. When the margins of the lochs are frozen, they are often indebted for food to their flat-billed diving cousins. This compact suits well, if the surface-feeders have only patience, as the dun-birds and tufts nip off the root, neglecting the grass, which despised fare is quite sufficient for the surface-feeder. The long neck of the wild swan enables him to reach the grassy bottom at a considerable depth, and to feed as if he were a diving dabbler. By turning up his tail and balancing with his feet, he can reach the bottom at a depth of four feet. Feeding at the bottom and yet never *totally* submerging himself, he may be called the connecting link between surface and bottom feeders. The whole tribe of geese keep much more to the sea; when they do come inland, they feed chiefly at the margin of our lochs as surface-feeders. Those diving dabblers, such as dun-birds and tufts, which

prefer the fresh water in winter, are generally pretty good for eating; but the flesh of the purely ocean ducks, such as the eider and the northern herald, is rank and useless. The reason appears to be, that they feed so much on crustacea, small fry of fish, and sea-weeds.

I will pass over the omnivorous birds very slightly. They are a mean, cruel, pilfering set,—Nature's scavengers. The raven, at their head, has certainly some fine points. He is bolder in his attack, and chooses generally a grand solitude for his hunting-ground, with a magnificent rock for his nest.

The raven is so early a builder, that I once saw a kestrel hatch its brood in the same nest after the young ravens had flown. Rooks, although living in colonies, are very jealous of any such interference. The justice they inflict on each other is very summary. If any pair steal a stick from the nest of another, the community immediately pull the nest of the offenders to pieces. This exposition of rook law was furnished me by an eminent member of the legal profession. I have often watched since, but have never seen a thief receive his due, although another friend assured me he had.

The first group of the *Omnivoræ* are the crows, ending with the jackdaw. Next come the magpie, the jay, the chough, and the starling; to which may be added some rare stragglers of beautiful plumage—such are the roller, the golden oriole, and the wax-

wing. The last is the only one I have had the pleasure of noticing. Three were shot by myself in my own garden. They fed upon the berries of the sweet-brier rose, coming morning and evening with an undulating flight, like the woodpecker.

OUR BIRDS OF PREY.

It is now high time to introduce that noble group, the birds of prey. The largest is the white-tailed sea-eagle, which a good deal resembles the vulture, both in taste and habits—often retiring far to the southward in winter, when food is scarce. He is the bog-eagle of Ireland, and the erne of Scotland, and is far better known than the golden, which never leaves his castle in the rocks. Foreseeing the coming storm, he so gorges himself with any prey he can lay hold of—say the carcass of a sheep or deer—that he is absolutely unable to move from the spot for some time after. He then betakes himself to his "own grey tower," the skies darken, and soon there is nothing but a dreary waste of snows. A week may pass—there he sits, defying the hurricane and despising the storm. A fortnight—still no change in him. For five long weeks will he keep his castle, never having tasted food. His wing may droop, and his motion be more loose and languid, but his eye is keen as ever. Like one of Napoleon's famished veterans forcing the

snow-girt Beresina, although his step may totter, his fierce and savage eye still shows the unquenched fire within.

And here, in contrast with the mighty eagle, allow me to introduce its equal in endurance,—the little gold-crest, the tiniest and most delicate of the British fauna, which the sternest storm cannot subdue. When the robin, the hedge-sparrow, and other soft-billed birds have long been sheltering in the out-houses—when the hard-billed finches and buntings have sought the protection of the farmyard—when the wild duck is dying of starvation, and the wood-cock driven to the sea-shore for a precarious subsistence—when the very divers are put to their shifts by the freezing up of their feeding bays,—I have seen this fragile bird alert and active, flitting from one forest-tree to another, with its little cheerful chirp, a note of gratitude in evil times. When we consider that the gold-crest is so delicate that, like the humming-bird, if captured by the hand of man, it never lives more than two days beneath his care, its winter preservation is the more remarkable, as displaying the Divine tenderness to such as need it most. The snows can never stop its supply, which is garnered up in the bark of those forest-trees, and consists of the eggs of gnats and smaller insects. By night they keep themselves warm, as instinct leads them to cling together. One of my boys discovered, by moonlight, a ball which seemed

fastened to the branch of a spruce-fir. On taking hold of it, he was rather startled to find it warm, and still more so, when it fell to pieces and flew away in different directions. This proved to be a bunch of long-tailed tits; but I have little doubt other small birds have the same cosy habit.

Next in importance as a bird of prey to the golden eagle is the gerfalcon. Inferior only in size and muscular strength to the eagle, fully his equal in courage, far his superior in dash, this splendid bird is the very model of grace, symmetry, and power. There is no grander sight of its kind, than the swoop of the gerfalcon on its prey. On the coasts of our northern islands, where a few still linger, there are numbers of the swift-winged blue-rock. The shadow of the falcon comes over these doves. They take wing with a crash. The falcon keeps the sky of them. His flight appears so light and easy, compared to the rapid rush of the pigeons, that they seem to be distancing him. But in truth he is passing them fast. Soon he gains headway enough—when, shivering his wings, and doubling up into the smallest compass, he comes down prone like a cannon-ball. You hear the thunder of his wings through the air. You see him emerge with his burden from the scared group, which now pursue their scattered and random flight.

Although the peregrine is not so terrible a falcon as the last, it is more easily tamed, and is indeed the most docile of the race. He takes up the ground

where the gerfalcon leaves off, and loves uninhabited moors and wild morasses. A pair will sometimes build their nest on the coast rocks, and I see them every year either on the Bass or the neighbouring islets. Grouse form their principal prey on the moors; but on the coast, they live entirely on the guillemots and puffins. Their flight is most elegant, and their swoop exactly the same as the gerfalcon's. Another beautiful little falcon, the hobby, is the only bird of passage in the group.[1] It never comes farther north than the middle of England. Unlike the peregrine, the hobby prefers cultivated fields and woody dells —larks are its chief prey. There are few more beautiful sights in falconry than the flight of the peregrine at a woodcock, or the hobby at a snipe. Woodcocks, however, trust to speed and doubling in the woods to outstrip their pursuer. Hence the flight is often so long and intricate, that the falcon cannot find his way back to his master; and except in open ground, the falconer is cautious of flying his bird at the woodcock. The snipe, on the contrary, being a high flier, as soon as the falcon is cast off, darts into the air, and there is a splendid struggle for the sky. Bound after bound they climb the air, until sometimes both are lost in the blue. *Wiser than man*, the little bird is well aware that the moment it takes the downward course, it is on the way to certain ruin. The little merlin, last of the tribe, is

[1] The hobby is precisely a peregrine in miniature.

inferior to none either in pluck or dexterity. He is a perfect beauty, and may be constantly seen in the fields round Edinburgh. He has been often described as a winter migrant. Numbers, however, build in our wilder wastes; and I have found them in Argyleshire, where the only prey in its nest were meadow-pippits or moss-cheepers, then most abundant on the moors.

There are only two British species of the true hawk. One, the goshawk, is occasionally to be met with in the south of England. It is large and powerful. The other is the common sparrow-hawk. Both are very active for a little while, but, having short wings, they are low-flighted, and often strike their prey even on the ground. They are quite unequal to the magnificent swoop of the falcons, nor have they their far-seeing eye; but for a short range their sight is quicker.[1] How admirably adapted is each for its own beat! A young friend of mine saw a sparrow-hawk lately come in upon some sparrows feeding in George Street, and lift one from the middle of the flock. This, in falconry-phrase, is called "raking." So great a poltroon was the sparrow-hawk, that, when they shouted, it let go the quarry, which flew much wounded into St Andrew's steeple. A falcon would not have been so easily scared from its prey. Once a black-cock and grey-hen flew into a cottage on my

[1] The shorter wings of the hawk are compensated for by his longer legs, which enable him to lift prey from the ground. The sparrow-hawk is like a dwarf goshawk.

shooting-ground in Mull, pursued by a peregrine. The tenant had them tame for some time. Mr M'Laine of Lochbuy, the laird, wished to have the birds for a friend; but as it was Hallowe'en night when they sought the old Highlander's protection, he thought it most unlucky to give them up, and dared not do so!

The harriers, next in the group, are beautiful creatures, and being continually on wing are easily seen. They have, however, neither the grandeur of the falcons nor the activity of the hawks. They take prey only on the ground, for which their long thin legs give them a great advantage. They are very low fliers, and do much mischief, especially before the young game-birds are able to take wing.

I now come to what I call the connecting link between the hawks and owls. Who has not seen the kestrel, hovering for minutes at a time, as if moored in the air?—a motion which her name of windhover indicates. She is looking out for mice, and with her telescopic eye can at once detect them even from that far height. She rarely attacks birds of any kind, and the good she does to the farmer no one can calculate. Of all the tribe they are the most numerous, and of course fine game for a lazy keeper to gull his master with. Once looking at a string of vermin amongst which the poor kestrels were the most conspicuous, I remarked to the keeper, that he might have spared these useful birds, which did no harm

whatever. With a knowing wink, he gave me what he thought a settler: "If they eat mice, they wad eat birds tae, like the cats!"

As the kestrel is the connecting link between the hawks and owls, the short-eared owl is the connecting link between the owls and hawks. It is sometimes called the woodcock-owl, coming and going with that migrant. Like the woodcock, however, some remain to breed on our moors. One was shot in August 1835 by a friend of mine on the Arrochar moors, pointed by his dog. They are often so active in the daytime as even to hunt for prey.

I have, for the sake of contrast, put up the most common of our owls in one case, as there is much difference in their nature and habits, which may easily be seen by a glance at their points. These are the smaller head and eyes, lighter body, and longer wings of the white owl. The reason of this difference is, that the white owl lives entirely on mice, while the brown is very promiscuous in its food.[1] Since the white owl is so dainty it must work for it, and to procure an adequate supply, it has to beat a great extent of country on wing. Hence its light body and stronger pinions. It is obliged to come out earlier and hunt later in the morning than the brown owl, and its eyes are therefore less, enabling

[1] As proof of the immense good the white owl does to the barn and farmyard, a gamekeeper on whom I can rely assured me he had once counted fifty-three fresh mice in one of their hoards for the nestlings.

it to see in clearer light. The latter keeps very late hours, so its large eyes are required. It takes prey from the perch; and not being at all particular whether flesh, fowl, or even fish come to hand, it seldom long wants a meal. A tame one of mine was very fond of earth-worms and frogs. I have had excellent opportunities of watching the nesting habits of both. In one of my shooting-quarters, the white owl reared its young in the roof every year; and in another, the brown owl was equally constant to a turret of the old tower. Almost before dusk the white owl regularly emerged from its attic, returning at longer or shorter intervals with a common field-mouse. It then perched on one of the chimneys within five yards of the drawing-room window where I was watching. It always paused for a few seconds, peering round to see that all was safe. It then changed the mouse from the talons to the bill, so as to leave the claws free to clutch the wall, otherwise, it could hardly have entered the narrow hole. I watched it constantly, and never saw any prey but mice, except once, when I clearly distinguished a small mole. The brown owl used to leave her turret when it was too dark to watch her, but as soon as the young were hatched, I looked at them almost every day. When they were old enough to be left by themselves in the daytime, a plentiful supply was deposited by the old birds. They always gave a sharp scream, to warn the young before diving down

the turret with food,—mice and young birds of different kinds, never old birds, once a half-grown partridge, another time two missel-thrushes nearly able to fly, very often a rat—not the disgusting Norseman, but the old Scotch black rat, one of which I had stuffed, as they are now extremely rare.

I now come to a class of birds, familiar visitants of every lawn and garden, and yet, from their unobtrusive habits, as difficult to observe as either the remote wader or the wild bird of prey. On a summer's day we see on all sides numbers of little birds, some on the ground, some perched on twigs, and some in the air, each amply supplied with its own proper food, whether that consists of winged insects, grass-seeds, or berries. In the boles and stems of the trees, however, are lodged the chrysalises and larvæ of many large and small insects, which not only injure the trees, but would be very noxious and troublesome if allowed to take wing. These it is the work of the woodpecker to seek out and devour. The peckers are divided into several kinds, all performing their allotted tasks. The greater spotted and green woodpecker are chiefly for the boles and stems of trees. The form of their feet, being like the parrot, and thrown very far back, only fits them for going up the tree, and over the tops of the branches. Their plan is to begin at the foot, and work their way, spirally, to the top, searching every crevice. If the green woodpecker detects an unsound part, betraying

the grubs beneath, it immediately begins hammering, until there is an opening wide enough for its long tongue, armed with reverse bristles, which enable it to bring out its prey as if with a hook. The spotted pecker has a different mode of setting to work; it bores with its bill like an awl, and so distinct is the sound from that of the green, that any one accustomed to them can distinguish it in a moment. We secured the spotted woodpecker many summers ago in Euston Park. My son, who had been looking out for one for more than a week, was trolling for pike; a fine eight or nine pounder had run twice at his spinning bait, and was grimly waiting behind a weed for the third cast, when the burr of the woodpecker sounded almost overhead. Down went the rod, and away he went for the keeper's gun. It was more than half an hour ere the bird bored again. But at last it did, and by patient dodging, he got a distant chance and dropped it. A green one he killed a few weeks before, tracking it by its loud laugh from tree to tree.

There is another woodpecker no larger than a lark, to whose special care the branches are committed, with the nut-hatch for its colleague. They both find out the eggs of small insects, which would be overlooked by the larger peckers; and the nut-hatch has feet so admirably formed for tree-life, that it can hop up, down, round about, and above stems and branches. So powerful are its claws, the hind-toes especially, that it can keep hold on the under side of a branch,

like a fly on the ceiling, and raising itself to the full stretch of its legs, hammer away, throwing the whole weight of its body into every blow. As the woodpeckers only strike with the head and neck, they have stiff tail-feathers to steady them to the tree; but to the nut-hatch, from its mode of working, this support would be useless, so its tail is short and flexible. But what becomes of our trees in Scotland, where there are no woodpeckers? The answer is quite as obvious as the question. We have here but few of the larger insects, except in those parts where the climate is more like that of England, such as Morayshire and some parts of Aberdeenshire. I have seen three specimens of the great spotted woodpecker on the banks of Dee, in the latter county. This leads me to speak of the little tree-creeper, perhaps the most useful of the whole race, and common all over our islands. It searches all the trees, young as well as old, with its slender bill, and can pick the eggs of insects even from the buds without injuring them. We are indebted for many a healthy blossom to the efforts of this little artificer. As the tree-creeper only requires to use its head and neck when feeding, it has, like the woodpecker, stiff-pointed tail-feathers, to assist it in climbing. Its motions, when at work, are more like those of a mouse than a bird.

There is still one more tree-bird, the wry-neck, a beautifully-pencilled migrant, which, from arriving a

short time before the cuckoo, is commonly called the cuckoo's mate. It, like the woodpecker, is confined to the southern and midland counties of England. Winged insects, which buzz around trees, especially those summer plagues, the flying ants, are its chief object. It will also storm the ant-hillock, picking up the ants and their eggs with its long glutinous tongue, faster than the eye can follow. Neither its bill nor its tail is fitted for woodpecker's work, therefore it has a different task assigned. Its name of wry-neck is acquired from its having the power to twist its head further round than any other bird. And here, in connection with insect-eating birds, I wish to mention a curious experiment I made years ago. Wishing to find out whether a hard-billed bird would rear the young of a soft-billed bird, and the reverse, I selected the spotted fly-catcher and the chaffinch, changing their eggs; and, to make more certain proof, I also put an egg of the willow-wren into the fly-catcher's nest. The result was, that both the young chaffinches and the young fly-catchers died when they were a week old, while the willow-wren was reared by the fly-catcher. Following up my experiment, I put a robin's eggs into a fly-catcher's nest; they were all reared, and flew.

I shall only notice one more group—the halcyons. They consist of the bee-eater and the kingfisher, both inhabitants of the river's bank, and their plumage is quite tropical. The kingfisher's is the most gaudy,

but the bee-eater's is the richest. The latter has a long slender bill, and feeds much on water dragon-flies, although, as its name imports, bees are a favourite morsel. It is rarely seen, and is only a summer straggler.

The bill of the kingfisher, both long and powerful, can easily secure small fish as well as every kind of water-insect. It has the power of casting up the indigestible parts of food in pellets, as owls do, which often betray the nest. I found several recently on the banks of the Thames, curiously dug into a chalk-bank, about a yard deep, exactly after the martin-swallow's manner in the sand. There is a popular notion that the kingfisher turns its little back of brilliant plumage to the water, for the purpose of attracting fish. If so, Shenstone, who boasted of his Nanny's eyes, that

> "The little halcyon's azure plume
> Was never half so blue,"

might have dispensed with the torch when spearing salmon in her company. The kingfisher can only pursue its vocation in those glorious days when sky, air, and water are equally calm and clear.

In such halcyon days it may be seen flitting past like the gleam of a rainbow, sometimes hovering over the water, to take unerring aim at the busy shoal beneath. It more often, however, watches the still deep pool from a bush or rail, and darts upon the

passing prey. Hence the beautiful allusion in the "Fall of Jerusalem,"—

"Sits o'er the gulf a halcyon bird of calm."

SPORT, AND PRESERVATION OF GAME.

About the beginning of the present century there was (compared with present circumstances) little ground reserved exclusively for deer. Many even of the forests were partially grazed by "black cattle," the deer being sparsely scattered over tracts of mountain and moorland, where now they can be seen in droves, tame almost like sheep.

The exorbitant prices freely offered for forest-ground, have tempted Highland proprietors to turn all they can into *deer* grazing (not meant for a pun); and the lessees, being naturally anxious to secure sport for their money, have crowded the pasturage with as many deer as it can possibly keep, thus following the example of grouse-tenants, but with the important difference in their favour, that deer, how numerous soever they be, if well fed in winter, don't die off by disease. If a man prefers to knock over half-a-dozen modern dwarfed harts to one of those mighty stags which were the boast of our ancestors, he has a right to his taste; but let any true deer-stalker drop a match to the stately animals of former

years, and I am much mistaken if he would change it for the degenerate produce of half his season's present sport.

In like manner every thorough grouse-shooter will far more enjoy his twenty or thirty brace of *picked* birds, bagged over superior well-broke dogs, than had he shot on moors so crowded that dogs were quite superfluous, or shared in drives or *battues* where often nearly half the killed and wounded, unretrieved and unmarked, were left rotting around.

When grouse have increased beyond the limit that a moor can carry, no doubt the only remedy is to drive them. It is not so clear, however, that "the skill required by the driving sportsman is proportionally greater," or that "driving" is the best method for killing down the old birds, as some keen shots assert. Every sportsman knows that when packs are tame, his first mark on the rise of birds ought to be the old cock, although he is likely to be the furthest bird from the gun. If by mischance or bungling the old sire manages to escape the first few weeks of a season, he soon teaches his young brood to take wing on the first signal of danger. A good shot and thorough sportsman is therefore always detected by the number of old birds found in his game-bag, so long as packs sit to a point. A cock grouse at once proclaims himself by his larger size and defiant crow, also by being generally first to top the heather and catch the shooter's eye. An experienced par-

tridge-shot can also pick out the cock of the covey with considerable certainty.

In a previous chapter I have tried to lay down plain rules how winter grouse may with care and caution be approached; but the general custom now is, when winged game grow shy and fretful, for sportsmen to exchange dogs for beaters, and so debar themselves from those finishing lessons in grouse-shooting which wild birds alone can teach.

All who prefer dogs to beaters are well aware that, when the first cold weather has thickened and strengthened the feathers of the birds, many of the old cock grouse, and some even of the old hens, leave the young broods and lead lonely lives until they pair in spring. These old birds prefer the rougher ground and rank heather for day shelter, and by November become so tame as frequently to sit fairly for a point. Only one very steady dog with excellent nose should be hunted at a time, and the grouse gillie ought to follow a long way in the rear.

Every favourable day till the 10th of December a tolerable bag of grouse can be made, eked out by snipe, hares, plover, and now and then a moor woodcock or two. In counting over my grouse at the end of each day, I generally found that at least half of them were old cocks, red as chestnuts, and unless kept in the larder for three weeks, tough as leather! So certainly did those tyrants of the moor form the staple of the day's sport, that when starting in the

morning, the shooter's brief notice, "I am going after old cocks," was well understood.

If the ground is extensive, four or five guns, each accompanied by a steady dog and gillie, and keeping far enough apart not to interfere with each other, may range an immense tract of moorland; and I will venture to assert, that by this method far more wild old birds will be bagged than by driving, and the ground be not half as much disturbed. As partridge never break their coveys till pairing-time, the above remarks have no reference to them.

Some time ago I noticed in a leading London periodical, that the writer of a sporting article maintained that two-thirds of the bag of all driving-parties were old birds. Taking it for granted that the absurdity of such an assertion would soon refute itself in the experience of all true sportsmen, I took no notice of it at first. On the contrary, however, it was taken as an axiom by many minor lights, who founded upon it strong arguments in favour of grouse-driving. It never seemed to occur to these advocates for driving to make any difference between good and bad breeding seasons, which slovenly inadvertence might teach the value of their theories. Some years ago, after an ungenial spring had destroyed the eggs and young broods, an old sportsman wrote to me that his "Twelfth" bag (over dogs) was 40 brace, but there were only three young birds among the eighty! Of course the driving-parties of that year would bag scarcely

any but old birds either. Take, however, a really good breeding season, when the experienced shot alluded to would have killed five or six young for one old bird—how would it stand with the drivers? The reply that old birds being more wary and stronger, would first reach the gun, will scarcely do. There might be some slight foundation for this retort at the very commencement of a season; but at the usual period when driving begins—viz., when grouse won't sit well to the point, it will not hold water. The young birds are by this time full-feathered, and as strong on wing as the old, which have long ere this thoroughly taught them the dread of man, and to take care of themselves, leaving them afterwards pretty much to their own resources. They will top the heather as shyly, and fly as swiftly, as their parents; and when the relative numbers of young to old birds are five or six to two, it is obvious enough how largely in the bag, at the end of the day, the young birds must outnumber their seniors. Let any thorough grouse-shooter, who knows a bird of the year *when quite grown*, from an old one, count his driving bag at the end of a hard day and judge for himself.

Driving shots are apt to insist on the superior "gunnery" of their practice, and certainly a fine performer at driven birds would most likely support his reputation at all times. I have, however, known men who (like famous artists of the pigeon-trap) had so completely modelled themselves on "stance sport,"

as miserably to disappoint their friends who persuaded them to try a day at other shooting. If, on the contrary, a first-rate shot over dogs fails at the driving stance, it is almost invariably from not calculating and allowing sufficient distance before swift-flying game, which a few lessons will soon enable him to correct.

A young driving shot is apt to fire into "the brown" of *packs* flying swiftly past, although at *single* birds he may shoot both well and quickly. The reason is that he has not presence of mind enough to select the bird (or birds, if he tries for a double shot) at which he means to fire. This is even more apparent when a promising beginner is shooting over dogs. He may knock down partridge after partridge should they spring singly, but at the first covey will often make a dead miss!

Avoiding the *questio vexata* whether more "skill" is shown in killing down our national bird by the help of dogs or with the aid of beaters, I would simply ask whether shooting to dogs or with beaters affords the best chance of a day's healthy exercise? Our fathers were indeed sorry walkers if, in a day on the hills, they did not cover far more ground than any grouse-driver "walking from position to position" possibly could; but let it be granted that the driving sportsman has plenty sharp marches from one shooting-stance to another, there is nothing more injurious to the strongest constitution than frequent cold rests

after brisk hilly walks; and it is these constant heats and cools that make our hill shepherds proverbially "short-lived."

It is a frequent grumble among sheep-farmers and shepherds that the whole Highlands will soon be under deer. The stalker may retort that the wool-growers have tried hard to turn them into one vast sheep-walk. As in every other mercantile matter, of course demand and supply will settle the question; and I for one feel grateful to the moneyed men who have rescued some of the finest sporting-ground, and most romantic hills and corries, from the treatment they would certainly receive at the sheep-grazier's hands.

Speaking with the experience of nearly fifty years in rented shootings, I affirm that only those who are willing to pay both sheep and game rent have real power over their sporting hills. They alone can prevent all intrusion, and set their neighbours at defiance. The only plan for those who share the ground in common with a stock-farmer, is to keep on the best possible terms with him. Should the game lessee and the sheep-tenant quarrel, the former is certain to get the worst of it. He will soon find that he gets hard blows, and can only return by make-believes.

Since wintering stock in the Lowlands and summer grazing on the hills has come into vogue, it is the interest of every hill-farmer to burn as much heather as he can for summer grass—a profitable enough practice for

sheep, but ruinous to game. Let the grouse-tenant, however, attempt to restrict a farmer in his spring burning, and the latter can safely and easily retaliate with tenfold vengeance. No one who has not suffered from it can imagine how these wholesale jungle-fires mar not only our sport, but debase and deaden our most picturesque mountain scenery; and it is only the proprietors or renters of deer-forests who can return year after year to find their cherished Highland resort fresh and unblackened as they left it, with the comfortable reflection, too, that no unfriendly foot has a right to disturb "the graceful flock that never needs a fold."

To kill deer or salmon is about the easiest sporting of the present day. The half-tame herds of modern forests are easily stalked; and driving deer like grouse-drives, is a lazy method of procuring chances without labour or skill. Boat-fishing for salmon, with expert oarsmen, levels that glorious pastime also to almost any one's capacity; but when gentlemen condescend to sunk fences in the forest, and stepping-stones at the salmon-pool, surely these are smart tricks invented within the sound of "Old Bow,"[1] to insure the success of such as mistake herons for eagles, and firmly decline to soil their knees or wet

[1] An old forester, not a hundred miles from Braemar, having been often mortified by his most skilful stalks ending blank, had evidently complained to his shrewd wife of the *London* rifle. With a knowing wink she remarked to me of its *London* owner, "I'm thinkin' he's no bad at the missin'!"

their feet. Are not such paltry ruses degrading to any manly recreation? Do they not strip it of all adventure, and tone down the very excitement and romance?

The sporting season for deer ends early in October, when they exchange the summer red for a winter coat of coarse dusky brown. It is then the rutting-time for both red and fallow deer, when the former, with swelled throats, fringed by shaggy manes, roar like bulls; and the latter, equally rampant and pugnacious, grunt like swine. Both fight savagely for chieftainship of forest or park, and the smaller red-deer harts or fallow bucks have to retire, until the champions, weakened and emaciated, sneak into solitude, refreshing themselves by plunging again and again into their moss-hole baths.

In mild winters, followed by an early spring and propitious summer, both red and fallow deer come into first-rate order by the end of July, which is shown by the glossy red coat, and hardening and clearing of the velvety horns. A severe snowy winter and ungenial spring retard very considerably the growth and purity of their antlers.

Red deer that are forced to confine themselves to woods for concealment, as in Mull, although they may be large and weighty, have far meaner heads than open forest stags. Their horns are stunted by constant shade, and I have shot three-year-olds with only knobs instead of horns. This deformity, however, enables

them to thread thick plantations much more easily and pleasantly than had they been adorned with a royal head.

There are wild fallow deer in some parts of Scotland, but, not being hardy enough to face the blast of exposed hills, are as much dependent on covert shelter as roes. I feel sure that these deer have all escaped from parks at no distant date. My father had a small herd of fallow deer on one of his highest mountains, but they seldom showed themselves on the heather, generally haunting the pine-woods or oak-copses on the hillside.

The beginning of October always ends the season for red-deer stags. Some of the younger harts which have not had much of the forest run, may remain longer in condition; while the *yeld* hinds and "heaviers" (ox deer) are good till Christmas. *Yeld* hinds are distinguished from the others by their lighter colour. Heaviers, of course, are hornless; but, being the exact shade of tidy hinds, ear-cropping is necessary to point *them* out.

The rutting-time for roe is early in summer, when "the bell" of the roebuck may be heard in all the woods they frequent. Naturalists have written that roes pair and keep in families—father, mother, and young ones—all winter. For the time the female is in season, no doubt these little deer pair; but directly after, the buck most likely seeks another mate. At all events, I can answer for it that bucks do not stick

to their female and family after the rutting-time; for in all my shooting-quarters where roe abounded, I invariably saw the doe and her brace or single fawn without any buck, whenever the pairing-time ended. I think the idea of roes living in families originated in detecting the buck consorting with the doe, followed by her well-grown young, when she was in season; for in autumn old bucks are generally met with solitary, and remain so until early winter, when they become more sociable.

It is a singular fact that the gestation of roe lasts for nine months, while the far larger red or fallow deer only go seven months with young. Anatomists have found out that in the case of the roe, the embryo lies dormant for several months—viz., from the rutting till January. I have shot roes all my life in winter, and never saw signs of young in the does when cut up, till the middle of January or beginning of February, when the young roes always begin to form. About this time, too, the new horns of the bucks grow, the old ones having been shed about Christmas; and by the end of February they are finely shaped in the velvet, and beginning to harden.

The very reverse of fallow and red deer, roes are never in good order for the table until they have quite donned the mouse-brown winter coat in November. They assume the summer red, and clean the moss from their horns, long before the larger deer, and the female roe drops its young earlier in spring.

A flock or two of wild goats still linger among the rocky peaks of some precipitous mountains. Like fallow deer, their ancestors, no doubt, escaped from captivity; but most unlike them in all else, these goats are the hardiest and most wary of all our rifle-game. They stand in the same relation to deer as ptarmigan do to grouse—preferring the bare inaccessible mountain cliff to all other feeding-ground. The kids are frequently dropped in February, and brave the late storms of that month as defiantly as their dams.

In feudal times, when the king of England and his powerful barons had whole districts of waste reserved exclusively for the chase, and the chieftains of the north were equally proud of their boundless forestry over mountain and moor, beasts and birds of prey, as well as those preserved for game, roamed these vast rugged solitudes, where now they could scarcely find a resting-place "for the sole of their foot." Wolves, deer, wild turkeys, and the great bustard, had once room and shelter even in fertile England; while in "stern Caledonia," the old white wild cattle of the country, and the now reinstated capercailzie, shared possession of the brown heath and the shaggy pine-woods with the mountain-stags and the national red grouse. And here the inquiry suggests itself, How has the banished "tetraoan chief" returned again to thrive and prosper? The problem is easy to solve. As population increased, and the dark dreary forests of the north were thinned or cut down, the giant

grouse grew more and more scarce, until the last specimen was killed among the ancient woods of Inverness-shire.

Gradually, however, the lords of the heather began to reclaim and improve their immense wild tracts, and tree-planting had its full share of their time, labour, and expense. Whole hillsides of larch and other copsewood sprang up like mushrooms; and by the time the "wood grouse" were brought back from Norway, many of these plantations had grown into formidable forests, fit homes for these noble birds, and exactly suited to their nature in every respect. Being gregarious at hatching-time, their nests were easily protected on their first introduction; and now, from a small beginning in Perthshire, they have adopted every favourable clump even within long distance of their first nursery at Taymouth.

I used to fancy that the last remnants of our native wild cattle were cooped up in a few high-walled parks, as dangerous objects of curiosity or interest. A few years ago, however, when threading a moor-road in Argyleshire, I stumbled on a domesticated herd of these white cows licking up the wayside grass. Far from being excited or angry, they permitted me to pass without challenge through the very midst of the "forty feeding like one." Their neat, well-set-on horns, black muzzles, snowy hides, and clean-made limbs, guaranteed both the antiquity and purity of their blood.

Wild turkeys, imported in the egg from America, frequently adorn our extensive preserves, where the rollicking shout of an old gobbler, more familiarly associated with a farmyard, sounds strangely out of place from the midst of an impenetrable thicket. These turkeys are unwilling to take long flights, and prefer to seek safety among the high branches of tall trees. The eggs are bought from Indians, who sell them to traders of this country; and the birds have the real "gamey" flavour, much superior to home-fattened ones.

The great bustard is no longer to be detected on Salisbury Plain or on the downs of Cambridgeshire, although about the end of last century, flocks of them, like small droves of sheep, were often noticed by shepherds or sportsmen. Many years ago I met a Suffolk squire, who a short time before had shot a female flying from one of his coverts to another. He told me he had no idea what bird he had shot; and as hen-bustards, like most of the *Gallinidæ* and *Cursores*, are very much less than cocks, and have not the rich markings of the male, there was nothing startling in its appearance on wing. This dwarf specimen of the ostrich family was most likely driven by stress of weather from the Continent, and being bewildered, had concealed itself in ground quite foreign to its nature.

Those who take the trouble to look around them, must observe how naturally every bird or beast

chooses the ground best fitted to afford it sustenance and comfort, and that the perfect organisation of each bird or animal to its own mode of life fully testifies to the Hand that formed it. Every "neuk" of the globe is what may be called "utilised," and even the most barren corners are all taken possession of by creatures whose physical conformation is expressly fitted for obtaining a livelihood in such sterile spots, *and nowhere else.* But man, intellectual man, who alone of all living things is scattered over the whole world, and reigns above the beasts of the earth and the fowls of the air, if turned loose to support himself even on the most fertile parts of his dominion with no other weapons or resources save what nature gave him, would be the only helpless creature in the whole creation of God.

Humbling though this may appear to be, it is in reality one great proof of his grandeur and dignity,—that with him alone the immortal soul is all in all; and with this stupendous gift, if he will only accept it on the free terms offered, he has the promise not only of "the life that now is, but of that which is to come." It is true that in the gloomy trackless forests where "the noble savage still runs," the red man is given far superior power to help and sustain himself than his white brother; but even *he* has recourse to artificial means for aid in his hunting craft, and when brought under the power of civilisation and religion, is forced to admit that his natural instinct has for-

saken him, and that so far as regards wood-life he has become weak and powerless as a "paleface."

If, therefore, the only rational being on the face of God's earth chooses to turn away from the prospects and promises so bountifully held out to him, and to bound his aspirations by this nether world, contented that his mental powers were given him for no higher purpose than to assist and supplement his bodily ones, he will one day find how deeply he has insulted his Maker, by contemning the high destiny ordained for him before "the foundation of the world."

MY MUSEUM.

FROM the commencement of my museum of British birds and animals, I made a rule only to admit specimens killed by myself. If my collection increased more slowly by this resolution, it gained immensely both in interest and value. When I look over my cases, I am transported in a moment from the rugged mountains or savage sea-rocks of Albyn to the stately lawns and forest-trees of "merrie England;" and in recalling many scenes of adventurous excitement, the beauty of the picture to me is only increased as old Time takes his brush to shade and to soften the whole.

For the purpose of giving my sons a life-interest in the study of natural history, I have admitted all additions shot by them to equal rights and privileges with my own. The collection has, in consequence, grown rapidly within the last year or two. Scarcely a season departs without some *rare* acquisition; and

for beauty and variety, though of course not for size, few British collections can much excel it.

The year 1857-8 was rather fertile in rarities. My eldest son shot an albino corn-bunting at Fort George, and in the Sound of Mull a great northern diver, which, when landed, charged him and his dog, screaming like an Indian; five bar-tailed godwits, a Sclavonian grebe, some lovely little terns and skuas, and several giant gulls. One of these giants, directly on falling, disgorged a stoat-weasel. This prey might have been drifted dead on the Mull shore by the tides; but if a gull had the ferocity to kill and devour a full-grown stoat, there are few harriers, or even hawks, that would care to profit by his example.

When a schoolboy, I had an adventure with one of these giant gulls, which my mind's eye sees more vividly through that long vista of years than many fresher and more exciting exploits. During my midsummer holidays on the banks of Loch Lomond, there was no more dignified game than sand-pipers screaming along the shores. One sunny morning I rose early to shoot a few couple of these summer snipes before breakfast. My brother lent me his new fowling-piece and shot-belt, as the only shooting-gear I could boast of was an old-fashioned powder-flask armed with iron rings, where the flaunty green cord was fastened which slung it over the shoulder. I had just loaded, and was pompously looking out for my sport, when I was surprised by two of these

magnificent gulls flapping lazily over my head. I fired, and winged my bird. The powder-flask was instantly shorn of its gay trapping, and the poor gull bound wing and leg as safely as a felon. I then knotted him firmly several times to the branch of a fallen tree. For more than half a mile I strutted along in dreamy delight, ere I thought even of reloading; but then remembered I had thrown down the flask where I pinioned my captive. Heedlessly leaning the gun against one of the next saplings, I retraced my steps, at a springy trot. No flask was to be seen. To make sure of the spot, I looked for the gull. Like another Jack Sheppard, he had untied knot after knot with his powerful bill, and fairly set himself free! There could be no mistake, as I was certain of the very twig to which I had bound him. A long, nervous, disheartening search, but no trace of either gull or powder-flask. I now felt my morning sport was "up," so doggedly returned for my brother's gun. Gone too!! The other losses now seemed trifles swallowed up by the gun. With great care I at last succeeded in discovering it. My minor troubles were again seen through a microscope; and Crabbe's graphic description of outward objects taking their colour from the inward feelings was truly my own experience. After bringing down my noble victim with boyish triumph, the sun shone so glorious on mountain, loch, and island, while the notes of the song-birds seemed to float on the fragrant air.

During my walk home the sun was too hot and garish, and the birds, in their unconscious gaiety, singing louder than ever, did but annoy and vex me, as if mocking my chagrin. I savagely thought of bestowing my remaining charge on the most tuneful throat!

The recital, however, of my many mishaps, made a merry breakfast-table. But when I claimed for my slippery captive the full size of a goose (none of the party being naturalists), I was overwhelmed with shouts of laughter. All my "gulls were geese," and my "geese swans," &c. I met with more sympathy, after breakfast, from the old cowherd. Without a sneer or banter, he listened to my long story, and then proposed we should have a look together for the powder-flask, which, at any rate, could not have run away. Under his methodical survey, I soon stumbled on my only bit of sporting property, and the marvel now was that I could have overlooked it before. Next day, when summer-sniping again, my brother and I detected a pair of black-backs on a long gravelly point, two miles below where mine was lost. I begged the stalk; but, ere I got within shot, one of them spread wing and made off, while its neighbour only waddled to the water. Throwing down my fire-arms, I made for the prize at full speed, when, splashing up to my middle into the loch, I managed to seize the end of my powder-flask string, which, like a tow-line, dragged in its wake, and safely brought my re-

captured craft into port. My triumph was complete, when all my former banterers allowed that it was, at least, the size of an average goose.

This is an old story. I now return to the spring of 1857, when I added a fine male of the barred woodpecker to our list of that year. There is small chance of either seeing or hearing this little bird after the trees are at all clothed with leaves. Its cry then ceases, and the keenest eye, though penetrating all their best-known haunts, may fail to detect a single specimen the whole summer and winter. About the end of March, when the morning sun grows powerful, these woodpeckers pair, and may be heard calling to each other, and boring the decayed branches of the forest-trees. When looking at one of these dead boughs, all shattered and bared by this small bird, I have often stood amazed at the strength and perseverance of so tiny a bill.

A rough wind or a cold grey sky generally silences them, and even in propitious weather they are pretty still during the daytime. No wonder, then, that British examples are not very plentiful, when the chief time for securing them is limited to a few sunny mornings in the course of the whole year. The beautiful domain of Park Place,[1] in Berkshire,

[1] The music of the May songsters makes a different impression upon different auditors. The wife of one of the lodge-keepers at Park Place complained that she could not sleep a wink for the nightingales. Indeed, *they was so troublesome*, she had "to get up at twelve o'clock at night for to stop 'em!"

always harbours a pair of barred peckers. When staying there some years ago in March and the beginning of April, the gamekeeper and his sons were kind enough to keep a look-out for them every morning during my visit. Often the weather was too cold for the birds to come forth, or the high winds drowned their call. At last one calm dewy morning (the fourth of my fruitless search), the under-keeper ran to me with the welcome news that the pair were at work among the tops of the adjoining elms. Although he had seen and heard both birds the instant before, when I got under the trees they were gone. While peering among the forest patriarchs, the keeper's whisper again hurried me to his side. A little bird was tripping from spray to spray; I instantly fired, but ere it fell to the ground, was vexed to perceive that I had shot—a nut-hatch! I must, however, do my helpmates the justice to say that their keen eyes were only matched by their quick ears; the faintest chirp of their victim, though smothered by a chorus of harsher or louder sounds, turned them at once into listening statues. Disappointments like this are therefore rare indeed.

Next morning was the 1st of April, calm and sunny. In crossing the flower-garden, I noticed a group of figures all intent on a corner of the wood, and as I slipped over the mown grass I distinctly heard the little pecker bore several times. To see it baffled us all. At last it darted out of the wood,

and chose a detached oak on the lawn. Bur-bur-bur from its gnarled branches. No sooner were we up than it glided through the tree, and took shelter in the woods again. Then, making game of us, the undulating flight once more passed over our heads back to the oak. This time I approached the tree cautiously, and fired a long shot. A tell-tale feather floated away, and the little borer sprang from the rotten stump on which it was at work, and clung to a thin branch. I allowed one of my boys, who was with me, to knock it over with my second barrel, and the barred woodpecker dropped dead. It was our good hap to fall in with the male, as his red crest plainly showed. Several times, soon after, the female both called and bored; but although watched for, she was never heard of nor seen after that morning.

The cry of this woodpecker is very like that of the wry-neck, and both are dwarf imitations of the kestrel hawk. There is a mournful pathos in the call, and yet it is pleasant too.

When we told of our prize on the 1st of April, the breakfast-party were too wide-awake to trust our word, and so were *made April fools* by their incredulity.

As the sharpness of the gamekeeper's youngest "lad" had been duly acknowledged in the woodpecker affair, he privately assured me, as a great secret, that the largest and "reddest" kingfisher,

frequenting that reach of the Thames, haunted a gravel-pit close to the boat-house. By a little watching he was sure I might provide her for the woodpecker's travelling companion on its journey to the bird-stuffer's! I accordingly booked the kingfisher for a visit at the end of my evening walk. This peerless little beauty is quite conscious of the notice its gay attire must excite, and generally seems bent on hiding itself from curious or admiring gaze; while the scared uneasy chirp, partaking of the restless character of the bird, sounds as if keeping time to the rapid darting flight.

Secure in my hiding-place, I had not long to wait for this signal-note, coming from what appeared a streak of blue crossing the pit, and stopping among the brushwood at its edge. Flit away, little heiress of many gems! but thou wert fated to be a prize, after all.

SALMON-ANGLING.

I SHALL hope to be pardoned if I claim for fishing the appellation of a science. I have never considered it, like shooting, a mere art. At all events, it has certainly not yet been brought to perfection; and the more able the angler, the more willingly will he admit, that not a season passes without his acquiring fresh secrets which he is not over-solicitous to tell. If a man fancies he can jump into proficiency after a season or two's practice, he is vastly mistaken; it is not a few fishing excursions now and then that form the adept, but the heedful experience of years. Take an instance; and suppose a man to be expert in the knack of throwing a line;—he is angling down a fine salmon-stream, followed by a finished master of the fly, and has just completed his last throw on a promising pool. Upon looking over his shoulder, his companion has hold of a good fish, at the very part of the cast on which he had bestowed the most care

and pains: he immediately suspects that his comrade has been more knowing in the choice of a fly. But when the salmon is landed, he discovers, to his amazement, that it was attracted by a facsimile of the identical fly which a moment before he had so dexterously tendered to its acceptance! Every really first-rate fly-fisher will meet with such occurrences, when angling in the wake of a less gifted craftsman. And although to the looker-on it appears as if he had charmed the fish, yet it is only by a more scientific knowledge of the *exact* spots where the salmon are likely to come up, and by *lingering* over these with the motion of a glancing insect. This mastery of the gentle craft can only be attained by long practice and the most perfect command of the rod.

Angling for salmon may be called the deer-stalking of the streams. As in the first sight of the herd there is more excitement, and more satisfaction when you bring down the stag than in any other game, so in salmon-fishing, compared with all other kinds, the interest is greater when you raise a fish, and the satisfaction double when you lay him on the shingly bank. Like deer-stalking, however, it has its disadvantages; not the least of which is, the greater stock of patience required, and the greater uncertainty of the sport; unless, indeed, in preserved waters, where there is much less opportunity of displaying the superiority of an accomplished fisher over the ordinary performer. In unprotected water, for

instance, should the weather be unpropitious, the best rod may flog the river for hours without stirring a fin; while a couple of fish is always reckoned a good day's work. Under the same untoward circumstances, the trout-fisher may often, by skill and perseverance, make out a very tolerable bagful.

I have heard it said by some pseudo-salmon-anglers, that the only pleasure was the hooking of the fish; and some have even declared they would not mind breaking every salmon directly after fastening him. Such men, to be consistent, should drop the salmon and stick to the trout—they will of course have more rises, and fix more fish; but their idea is absurd. If they have arrived at such a pinnacle of perfection, why not reduce their tackle to a single horse-hair? And if even this should be too strong for their exquisite skill, let them carefully cull the softest hair from the softest lock of their own softer heads.

However one may admire the dexterity of a master of the rod, as he casts his line between every opening among the trees, in a difficult river, yet I would rather see him manage his fish after hooking it; the cool nerve and delicate touch are the very perfection of art: and I should never pronounce a man a true salmon-fisher until I had seen him working one in a difficult situation. To throw a very long line, and to search the casts properly with the fly, are no doubt indispensable requisites; but a river fly-angler (for I

don't here speak of either bait or loch fishing) who can work his hooked fish scientifically, will seldom be deficient in all the pre-requisites for fixing him; while the *rising* man, who has only fished preserved waters, where all is clear and open, should he hook a salmon in a difficult place, will most likely find that he has got hold of too strong a customer. And here we may ask, what was the magic in angling that captivated the intellects of such men as Chantrey and Davy? Sir Humphry, I suspect, would have looked rather queer if an officious friend had told him that all the sport was over when the forty-pound fish he landed above Yair Bridge was first hooked. And the great sculptor would have been equally astonished if the struggles of a sixteen-pound Thames trout had been treated with the like contempt! Whatever may be the reason, all true anglers know that the doubtful contest with a monster-fish forms no inconsiderable part of the enjoyment; and his being laid upon the shelving bank the crowning point of all. No doubt the philosophy or the poetry of angling was one reason of its being the pastime of so many great minds; but when even contemplative Walton had fairly landed a gorgeous fish, I will venture to say that the triumph of success swallowed up every other pleasure.

But, without analysing their feelings, we know not how much we owe to this recreation of departed genius. Might not the safety-lamp have been lit

amid the limpid waters of the Tweed, and some of the most beautiful creations of Chantrey's fancy have been first conceived on the green banks of Father Thames? Great men, however, can sometimes be great boys at the water-side. I have witnessed, with some amusement, the late Sir Charles Bell's comical vexation, when an unlooked-for rod bore down upon him. His testy frown, when interfered with, was quite irresistible — proof enough of his eagerness in the sport. But perhaps this unbending of the bow may have given it double power when strung again. Sir Charles was only a second-rate fisher; and it often seemed curious to me that he, and several men of the brightest intellect whom I have watched at the river-side, were more ignorant of their favourite amusement than of any other thing. I should not have wondered at any want of practical skill, so much as at their ignorance of the habits of fish; their knowledge scarcely excelling that of the herd-laddie, who stared at them with vacant gaze.

Every newly-arrived salmon-fisher should secure the services of the ablest native practitioner who may proffer them, and he will thus be shown all the best casts of the river. It is absurd vanity to suppose one's self capable of discovering them without a great waste of time. No doubt a good salmon-angler will at once perceive the places where fish are most likely to harbour; but the misfortune is, that those casts which *appear* the most certain may sometimes deceive,

while there are particular nooks, perhaps the least attractive even to an experienced eye, where a fish is pretty likely to rise: this is especially the case when the river is swollen. An angler must have but a poor knowledge of his craft, who, after once or twice fishing down a stream under proper guidance, could not afterwards manage for himself. It will be very necessary to get a list of the most killing flies in use, on the spot, and tie them of various shades and sizes.

Many city anglers have some country guide whom they affirm to be the best fisher in the kingdom. This professional, making merchandise of his local knowledge, has most likely taught them all they know; hence their reverence for his skill. These "regular fishermen," by continually harassing all the unprotected water, from the opening to the close of the season, are the pests of the districts they haunt. Of course they know every mood of their own streams, and all the best flies and baits; but take one of these notables to a river he knows nothing of, and pit him against a few good average fishers, also ignorant of the water, and it will generally be found that there are many equal, some perhaps superior, to this "best fisher in the kingdom."

After having been thoroughly shown the casts of the river when swollen, it may be as well to have recourse to the guide again, when it becomes small and clear; as some pools that are excellent in flood, are not worth a

throw when the water has fallen in—and others that were too foaming and boiling when the river was large, then come into prime order. The resorts of salmon, however, are much more easily detected when the river is low. This state of the water also requires considerable difference in the fly, chiefly in size. In my opinion, most salmon-fishers use too large hooks.

A stranger will often find his guide's knowledge superior to his practice; and that is the reason why the lower orders frequently excel those who might appear to a spectator to throw a better and finer line. Some anglers have an additional piece to screw on to their rods for long casts; a very thin butt is required when this piece is not added, and it is more apt to twist the rod. If equal in other respects, a man who has the power of throwing a very long line has the same advantage over a less gifted friend, in this particular, that a far-killing gun has over an inferior one, both in the same skilful hands. I should therefore advise every aspirant to excellence in salmon-fishing to attain this knack in the greatest possible perfection.

Large rivers require a large rather than a gaudy fly, which must decrease in size as the river narrows. Rapid brawling streams, on the contrary, take a gaudy fly rather than a large one. There are many Highland burns where salmon and sea-trout ascend in numbers in the autumn. These being generally shallow and rapid, a large fly would frighten as many as it

would attract. If you fish with a small hook of sober colour in such troubled water, it might not catch their sight. Streams of this kind are in best order when tumbling over stock and stone something like the colour of London porter. The reason why a large fly of sombre hue is preferred for a stately river, arises from the depth and clearness of the water. A large fly is required to catch the attention of fish at the bottom, while gay colours would be apt to alarm them as they come up, when the water is so clear. When a large river is also rapid, as in the higher parts of the Tay, the fly may be proportionably bright. The size of the stream is an excellent criterion for that of the hook; and you may see every village urchin fishing for the spring trout in Tweed with a hook double the size of that which he uses in Gala, or any of the other tributaries, for the very same purpose; the favourite fly in both cases being a woodcock-wing, hare's-ear body, tied with blue thread.

In the deep rocky parts of the river, especially at the beginning of the season, put on your largest fly, trying a smaller should you not get a rise. In the rapid Highland streams, where, as I have said before, a small fly should be used, if you need any alteration, let it be in colour rather than in size. But on this point, as no invariable rule can be given, it will be better to get advice on the spot, if you can obtain it. For instance, though the Thames is so sluggish, and the trout so wary, the most killing fly there is what

they call "the soldier-palmer"—that is, a bright-dyed hackle, red pig's wool, and gold tinsel.

When fishing for salmon only, never have two flies on your cast. The pleasure of hooking more fish will not make up for the vexation of losing one, even should more be secured in the long-run. This, however, must be a matter of taste. By changing the fly judiciously, you have nearly as good a chance with one as with two, although sometimes the fish may be a little longer in stirring. Don't be *too* certain that you have detected the most killing fly because fish take it well one day, as salmon, in some moods, will rise at anything you throw over them.

When large rivers are so low that the salmon reject the smallest legitimate fly, reduce your hook to the size of those recommended for the Highland streams—viz., what is called a sea-trout fly, and try before the sun is up, and after it sets. It is needless to say that this fly must be of a very sober cast. With these reduced flies, and no glaring sunshine on the water, a fish may now and then be taken in the pools, when there would have been no chance with the smallest salmon-hook. An excellent fly for some light summer waters is a ptarmigan wing, dull yellow, or dark-green body, and a hackle half black and half red. This is first-rate for large sea-trout. In the Echaig, a blue jay-wing is a standing favourite, both with salmon and sea-trout, in every state of the river; and even in full flood they refuse a lighter wing.

A dark mottled pheasant-tail for wing, red body, and gold tinsel, is also a choice fly for the grilse and salmon of that water.

The salmon almost always keep the channel[1] or deep parts of a river; so, if it is fordable, you will often have to change from one side to the other, as the heaviest stream alters its course. In small waters this is not difficult, but in great rivers one is frequently obliged to make choice of a side. This requires judgment, as much of the day's sport depends on securing that one which combined circumstances render the most desirable at the time.

Trolling with parr is a most deadly method, the bait being so gaudy, but it is ruinous to fly-fishing. If a parr has been trailed over a salmon, there is little chance of its rising to the fly for some time, perhaps not even for that day. The Scotch peasantry have invented a substitute for the Thames trolling-rod. I had one made by a country joiner, although without *joins*, which cast even the fly nearly as well as my best salmon-rod; but the point being stiff, it was better adapted for parr or minnow. By unwinding the length of line you wish to throw from the reel, and then pulling it through the large rings, until only a few yards hang down with the appended bait, you

[1] This rule does not hold good with trout. Often the weather-side of a stream, even when shallow, is the surest find for them, because the flies and other insects, being drifted across, are collected on the opposite bank. In *lochs*, they would be devoured almost as soon as their voyage had begun; therefore the contrary rule obtains.

can jerk it out something after the manner of an English troller, with this difference, that the cast is made over the right or left shoulder. Some prefer a supple top, which entices the fish from its lively spinning, but is more apt to miss them. After all, it is but a sorry shift for the beautiful smooth underhanded casts of the Thames anglers. Even a moderate performer with a London trolling-rod, would excel the most skilful Highland parr or minnow fisher. There is also this great advantage on the side of the southern rod, that it injures the bait far less. But indeed the English manner of baiting, and their whole arrangement of trolling-tackle, are very far superior to ours. I have fished with Thames trollers who were so particular as to bait differently with a bleak from a gudgeon.[1] A bleak is best on a dark windy day, from being showy —a gudgeon on a calm bright day, as its dark colour conceals and confounds the hooks. By the same rule, a loach is good in our lochs in clear weather. Bleak, however, is thought the best spinning bait on the Thames, unless at very rapid mill-dams, where the tougher gudgeon is not so apt to spoil.

Young herring, from their shining scales, are found

[1] A bleak, with three rows of three hooks, tied back to back, and a single hook the reverse way, to separate the lowest row from the one above: and one top hook through the lips of the bait. A gudgeon, two rows of three hooks, one of two, and a single hook for the lips. It is of no use to describe the process of baiting, as every man must take a practical lesson from a good troller, before he can make any hand of it.

to be a most enticing bait for salmon. I have often tried them with success, especially in the lochs. Of course they must be used salt. The great objection to using them in the river is, that they are so very tender.

Should the water be confined, and the streams narrow and rapid, every inch may be searched by standing at the pool-head, and letting out line by yard-lengths, shifting the bait alternately from one side to the other until all the reel be nearly expended. Unless the river is flooded, very little lead is required. Pull your line, instead of winding it, slowly back again, searching as before, and when satisfied, wind up and proceed to another pool. When the river is broad, and you require to throw, you can make very far casts, as the parr is tough and not easily spoiled. Swing it gently back as far as you can, and then bring it forward in the same way. I have seen a man with only one arm, a perfect master of this kind of throwing—so much does it depend upon a little knack. Some will say that very rapid spinning is not good. But I have always found, both in boat and river trolling, whether with minnow or parr, that the more rapid and true the spinning, the greater my chance of stirring the fish. When trolling for salmon or large shy trout, I therefore adopt the mode of the Thames fishermen, on account of the superiority of the spinning, as well as the lesser risk of missing the fish.

When the diminishing water prevents the salmon

from rising at the parr, you may still succeed with minnow, in the streams, especially about dusk. Very large trout, also, that scarcely ever rise to fly, dash freely after the minnow when the sun is down. They may also take it in the daytime, if the water should be a little swollen and the sky cloudy. But the river salmon-fisher is more indebted to bait than either parr or minnow; and for this reason, that salmon will take a worm when the river is so low that they refuse all other kinds of prey. In river-angling a large hook should be used, and a mixture of dew-worms and the small red, or the brandling if it can be procured. The bait should be massy, nearly as thick as your little finger. This is accomplished by pushing up all the odds and ends of the worms you put on, along the shank of the hook and the gut, more or less, according to the angler's fancy. In rapid running water, a good lump of bait is more easily seen from a distance, and if a fresh worm be put on the point of the hook, the imposture cannot well be detected in the moving stream. Lead the line to reach within a yard or so of the bottom, and search every inch of pool and stream, noticing the slightest tug. When you perceive the least straightening of the line, always go over the same inch until you either fix the fish, or disgust him. Never be in a hurry with a large fish: give him time, if possible, to gorge. A good hold is half the battle with a good salmon, as, in a long-continued struggle, an

indifferent one is apt to wear and give way, often at the few last faint efforts to spurn the shore.

Behind large stones and in eddies there is always a good cast for worm; and in searching the latter you cannot be too particular. Try every variety of depth and current; in fact, seem to humour the line, though dexterously guiding it. No greater test of a practical bait-fisher than this.

I always like to have some bait in my pocket, even on the most propitious day for the fly; and I may cite the following successful results in support of this practice. There are four pools at the top of the Echaig, a little separated from the other casts. As the season advances, the large fish are very apt to remain in them. My custom was generally to begin at the lowest of these pools, fish up with fly to the top, and, if unsuccessful, to put on bait, and rake them down again. In the autumn of 1847, I rose a salmon in the bottom pool at the first throw—gave him a rest, and rose him again. Another ten minutes' rest, while I put on a smaller fly. He rose a third time; but not wishing to disgust him, I passed on to the pool above. A second salmon rose near the tail of the pool. But, although I gave him the customary "law," and also changed my flies, he was stubborn. I therefore walked off to the two top pools, but no fish moved in them either at fly or bait. I returned to my first salmon—up he came again, keen as ever. I left him once more for his neighbour in the pool

above, but his mood was still unchanged. I therefore put on bait, when he dashed at it like a bull-dog. In about twenty minutes I had him extended on the grey shingle, half on land, half in water, when his hold broke. I rushed down, but had the mortification to see him waddle into the deeps again. With my crest a little lowered, I descended to my *quondam* friend in the first pool; a fifth time he rose fiercely. I therefore waited the usual time, and he rose again. Upon the seventh trial, however, he refused; so I gave him the same lure which had nearly proved fatal to the other. Instantly he was at it and fast. But a more cross-grained "sea-king" I never contended with. It was about twelve o'clock when I hooked him. At one, he was fresh as a "lave-rock." About forty yards below, a tree that jutted over a deep part of the river prevented my leading him down stream, so he had every advantage, and, I must say, seemed inclined to take it. Sometimes he would sulk, and when with great trouble I shook him off the bottom, he would rush up or down the pool, terminating his vagaries by a fair somersault. Half-past two o'clock, and my arm quite tired. I looked often to the road for assistance, but no one appeared. A little before three, I saw a car, and hailed the driver, who good-naturedly left his vehicle, and to my question if he could gaff a fish, replied that "he wasna gude wi' the flee; but gie him a stroke at the sawmont wi' the clip, and he wadna

seek anither." I gave him my gaff, and began to strain and shake the salmon, if possible to bring him within the reach of my self-confident ally. At last I brought him with some difficulty near the fatal weapon. The "stroke" was given, but it was too plain the "sawmont" would require if he did not "*seek* anither!" The man had scraped him, and thus rendered him desperate. Down he pushed, past the tree. It was not of so much consequence now, for I gave my rod to the driver for a moment (who handled it exactly like his whip), got round the tree, and was all right. Having the command of the stream, I soon brought the fish under the bank, when the man gaffed him cleverly. Although so game, he was only ten pounds weight; and had I not been hampered with the tree, I should have managed him in half an hour. I anticipate the remark, "A bad day for the fly is often a good one for the worm." This maxim was not applicable in the present case; for with one of the flies, several times refused by the salmon, I hooked and landed a three-pound sea-trout, in the next pool I fished. No sooner had I dropped it into my bag, than a five-pound grilse sucked down the same fly as eagerly as the trout did, and shared the same fate. I had no more time to spare; but, if I could have remained, I should probably have had prime sport with the fly, as I left a beautiful reach of the river untried.

About a fortnight after, the water was again in

excellent trim for the fly, and I was alongside of the pool I considered surest for a heavy fish. After twice going carefully over it with the most approved flies, and without even a break, feeling almost certain that a salmon lodged there, I again had recourse to the worm. At the very foot of the pool, where it joined the shallow, my bait stopped, and the peculiar twitching of the line made good my prognostic. Allowing him time to gorge, I struck, and had hold of a noble fellow. After a good struggle, I landed the largest fish I ever secured in the Echaig, fifteen pounds and a half when I brought him home. This day, however, neither salmon nor sea-trout would look at a fly.

A raw salmon-fisher is seldom aware what sized fish has risen. It often appears much smaller than it actually is, from the foreshortening caused by the salmon coming straight up, seizing the fly, then descending head foremost; which last motion generally gives a glimpse of its tail. Instead of this, if the fish should flounder its whole body out of water in coming at the fly, the effect is very imposing, and even a six-pounder will appear to the novice a perfect monster.

When hooked fish splash on the top of the water, take great care, or you may break their hold by too tight a strain. The opposite extreme is equally dangerous, as they may then shake the hook out of their mouth. It is the nicety of art to let them get down without falling into either error. Should the

river be small, of course most of the heavy fish will be collected in the deepest pools. Pay most attention to them. When stones and rocks are easily seen at the bottom, there is a clearness either in the air or water that hinders fish from stirring freely; you have then, perhaps, a better chance with worm than anything else. Also, when leaves and other rubbish come floating down, they frighten fish, and prevent their seeing the fly. The nearer the bottom you angle, of course these impediments are less in the way. They are most troublesome on a windy day. When foam is thick upon the water, fish rise badly to fly. A succession of floods, or, as we call them, "spates," will gorge the fish, and make them shy, especially of taking bait. In landing a salmon or any heavy fish in a river, if possible get below him. You are thus favoured by the stream. Whereas, by standing above, you hang the fish's weight against the current, and are more apt to strain and break its hold.

I shall here add an instance or two of the fastidiousness of salmon at one time, and their voracity at another; by which it will be evident that there are days when a very bungler may capture them, and others when all our skill is well needed. In summer, when the Teith was rather dwindled, a Highlander rose a grilse with a small sea-trout fly. He, of course, gave him a rest, and tried him with a larger, to no effect; went back to the small one, and

again rose him. He then put on, in succession, a worm, a parr, and a minnow, without getting a tug; and, as a last resource, cut off the parr's tail,[1] when the fish came up greedily and fastened. He would never have wasted so much time had he not known that, from the low state of the river, there was little chance of another rise all day. On the other hand, a shepherd lad was looking dreamily over the Brig of Turk, upon the large deep hole below, overhanging which the martins had formed a colony in the sand-bank, when one of the young martins fell out of the nest into the river, and was immediately gulped down by a large salmon. The shepherd procured a bait-hook and the coarsest tackle, took another young bird out of the nest, and baited; the fish at once came up again, was hooked, and landed.

Salmon are certainly far scarcer now than formerly, and the average weight of those taken is much decreased. Sixteen-pound fish are now as rare as twenty pounders used to be many years ago. Several reasons are suggested for this falling off, but the most rational I have heard is the dexterity of the sea-netters close to the mouths of all our good salmon rivers and streams, and latterly the rage for thorough-draining, which makes the rise and fall of the rivers

[1] The parr-tail is an excellent substitute for the minnow, and in some moods of the water is to be preferred. It is easy to bait with, and bears very rough usage on the hooks. The head and shoulders are cut off in a slanting way, and you bait in the same manner as with the minnow or parr.

both sudden and extreme. In consequence, the winter spawning-beds are often left so shallow as to be chilled and rotted by frost.

When living in the neighbourhood of the Border river a good many years ago, the proprietor of an estate on its banks once remarked to me, that salmon-fishing was "too *slow* work for him." He was a keen trouter, and in the constant habit of whipping the Ale, the Rule, the Leader, and the Gala. It is still more common to hear these fast trout gentlemen complain that trolling for the *Salmo ferox* is "tiresome work." A first-class fisher (for no one deserves the name who has not been thoroughly indoctrinated into the mysteries of the salmon, as well as the various scientific methods of trolling for large fish) will quietly smile, perhaps *seem* to agree, and let it pass. He is quite willing to defer to the opinion, albeit dogmatically asserted, that a good yellow trout requires the same skill to capture as a twenty-pound salmon, and affords quite as much sport. Of course he is not careful to make proselytes who might turn into competitors, to jostle him on a favourite loch or river.

Trouting is, however, only the germ of salmon-angling. The best trouters, whenever they have opportunity, take to the salmon, and only a sparse sprinkling even of them attain to eminence at large fish. With a small rod and fly I have known dozens of excellent anglers, some even mere lads, who were pretty expert; but a true salmon-fisher is rare. It

is pleasant to witness the enthusiasm of a trouting devotee, firmly intrenched in the conviction that his own is the most scientific department of the art. Let him be advised, however, to get out of this nursery fishing, to be a salmon angler if he can, and he will be the first to acknowledge its vast superiority over yellow trout, in practice, science, and sport. I never yet met with a finished salmon-angler who had not been an adept at trout, although I have known many excellent trouters who never could get beyond second or third rate salmon-fishers.

It is only in a stream of considerable bounds that the eminent angler can fully display his power. Those brawling brooks where salmon and grilse only ascend during floods, and which can be commanded by a grilse-rod, are too much akin to trouting to suit his taste. Such being, I will venture to say, the feeling of all our leading salmon-anglers, it follows that to command much water is a primary requisite. To give more power in this respect, I have for many years adopted the plan of what is called spinning the line. This consists in slowly pulling it through the rings with the left hand, at the same time you are playing the hook on the water. The advantages consist, first, in the more enticing movements of the fly; next, in the greater command you have of the tackle, should a fish rise; lastly, by enabling you to take fuller and freer casts, especially when trees or other obstacles are behind. Although not properly spin-

ning, yet the line is pulled in exactly like underhand trolling; with this difference, that in bait-trolling the whole line is drawn through the rings (except the yard at the rod-point with the appended bait), and lies coiled on the bank, preparatory to the next throw; whereas in salmon-fishing you can only draw in line until it touches the ground. By also giving one or two turns of the line round the hand, there are about two yards and a half saved from the back cast, and added to the clean sweep of the river. Considerable knack is required; but when a man is quite master of the cast, the line is delivered straight as a rule, and the fly lights soft and smooth at the end of it. Having thus fished with a long line to the foot of the pool or stream, most anglers would wind up, and proceed to new water. I am loath to do so (unless stinted by time), without giving the most likely spots another chance by winding over them. This is done by fishing backwards; not *up* stream though—that would never do. Throw the line fairly over the water you expect a fish to lie in, then wind up *very slowly* over him; continue taking a step or two backwards, repeating your long throw and slow wind over these choice places until you are satisfied.

The angler, if he pleases, may cast and wind over alternately in going down the stream, and not fish it backwards at all; or he may reserve his wind-over for a favourite spot, where he is certain a salmon has taken post. But the man who knows the river best

will always make the most of the wind over; for even an able angler without this knowledge may waste too much time in winding over tempting places where fish seldom harbour. It is the exact perception of the seats of fish, and where they may shift about according to the varying moods of the river, that constitutes half the science of angling. As the late eminent Dr Munro used to say of medicine, "It is but shrewd guessing, after all." Nevertheless, as in physic the shrewdest guesser is first physician, so in angling the shrewdest guesser, if not *always* the ablest, will go far to be the most successful fisher.

This winding over fish is most deadly. I have again and again moved them in my backward course, when they never stirred in the ordinary way. Often, also, having raised a fish several times, and fairly put him down, I have hooked him at the first wind-over, and that, too, with the very rejected fly. As to changing the fly, the angler must be guided by his own judgment, according to circumstances. For instance, if a fish bangs up keenly the first time, misses the fly, then comes up languidly the second time, it is a bad sign. A change and long rest may be as well. If, however, the salmon only bells up at first, and gives a fine bold dash the next time, give him a third trial with the same fly. He will be pretty likely to take hold the third rise. Should he not, but still continue his free offers, patience is your best course. Rest him, and renew the attack at intervals

with any fly you fancy most enticing. I have sometimes fixed these playful fish after nearly a dozen rises, and as often as not with the original fly that moved them. They are apt, however, to hook tenderly if they take hold at all. When a fish springs freely the first rise, I am inclined to clap my fly instantly over him a second time. Very often he will come up wickedly and fix. Should he not stir, or only make a languid roll or a bell up, I should feel much disposed not to disturb him for some time; and when I did, it would be with a fresh fly.

Sometimes (but rarely) if the size of fly suits the stream, salmon will come up and fasten on any colours that may be thrown to them. They are oftener so very particular as to refuse all flies but those of the very same shade, dressed exactly alike. Both these moods of fish, however, are exceptional; and salmon or grilse, as a general rule, may be more or less tempted by several judiciously selected hooks. Although the second of these moods may, at first, try the ablest angler, yet, after the favoured fly is found out, it is all plain sailing enough. If he is baffled in discovering it, the best fisher is pretty much on a par with the worst. The third and most common mood of fish will always afford fullest scope for the thorough salmon-fisher to prove his skill.

Every successful fly-angler for large fish knows what I have stated; but, as a help to the inexperienced, I will copy from my memorandum-book

two days' practice, as fair examples of the first and second mentioned moods of fish. As the surest test, I have chosen both fishing-days from thin, clear, summer water, when I had two flies on my cast.

First mood, when fish will rise at almost anything. Began to fish at six in the evening, leaving off at nine. A brightish body, though not gaudy, and light wing for trail, with a dark fly for bob. Killed five fish — three at the trail, and two at bob. All fastened at the first rise except the last fish. I touched it slightly the first time, gave it a long rest, when, in spite of being pricked, it came up again and fixed firmly.

The fastidious fishing-day was from five to half-past eight in the morning. In second pool rose a fish at both bob and trail several times. At last, fairly put him down. Gave the usual rest, and exchanged the trail fly for another deeper in colour and longer in shape: hooked and killed him with the change the second cast. Landed three more fish with this trail fly: all hooked at the first rise, and not a fin would stir at the bob.

It must be owned that the caprice of salmon does now and then set at nought all rules and calculations. When my son returned from Cambridge for a few days' fishing at Easter, I gave him the first of the water, and tied for him some killing flies. He rose a large fish twice in one of the lowest pools. In the centre of our fishing stretch another salmon belled up. As

both showed signs of laziness, we left them till evening, when they were pretty certain to be more lively. Near the top of the water he landed a small fish of seven pounds. As it was getting late, I proposed we should try the centre fish, reserving the low one for the next morning. "To lose the chance of the large fish! rather lose *half-a-dozen* dinners." So off he trotted, leaving the smaller one to me. At the first cast I made, he plunged freely out of the water; but although I wasted near an hour trying every fly I possessed, and resting him between, he never moved a second time. When nearly dark, and dinner over, the Cantab arrived with a clean fish of twenty-one pounds. He had again started the morning salmon, at intervals, three times, and quite disgusted him; fly after fly had been *wound* over him in vain. My son had actually wound up his line, and with rod on shoulder, walked a few paces on his road home. All on a sudden he remembered having in his box one untried fly, which we had both proved thoroughly useless on our river. At the first free sweep of the before and *since* neglected lure, this large cautious salmon rose keenly, fastened firmly, and, after an exciting run of three-quarters of an hour, was safely brought to land.

And here I would caution all good fishers never to brag of hooking "the largest fish they ever had on," unless they bring him home. They may safely leave that boast to the unsuccessful, who are really

apt to fancy every salmon they lose a monster. I was much amused one morning to hear that a sedulous brother of the rod had hooked a tremendous salmon the evening before, and lost him after some hours' play. The story was simply this: A short time before dusk he fixed his fish, which creeped down to a heavy pool below, and sulked. No doubt it succeeded in rubbing the hook out of its jaw into a sunk root or tree. The careful angler remained with his rod on full bend, till some of his anxious family found him near midnight in this interesting position: he then broke, not his fish, but his *fast*, which he ought to have done hours before.

The constant floating of trees is a serious objection to angling on the Dee; not so much from the rafts coming over the pools, as the constant scraping of the setting poles on the bottom, and stray stems of trees breaking away from the float, which often settle in the finest casts of the river and block them up. I always transpose the old adage,

> "A mile o' Don's worth twa o' Dee,
> Except for salmon, trout, and tree"—

thus,—

> "For salmon's sport, a mile o' Dee
> Beats twa o' Don—keep aff the tree."

In spite of every caution, I have, like the above patient fisher, often lost the first boast of the Dee by means of the third. Once, when a good salmon was playing freely, and the run at its height, the fish

stopped suddenly in the throat of a rapid stream. The weight of water giving the line and rod's point a lively look, quite deceived my companion, who kept insisting that the fish would soon move. Having doubts, I gave him my rod, and, wading in, easily detected the sunk tree wedged across the current, with my fly stuck in the wood.

On the last day of the fishing season in 1853, the river being too large, and fish stubborn, I raked all the water with my most deadly flies, from the top to the second lowest pool, without a single offer. In this pool was a "potted" fish, which I had raised and touched on two former occasions. That very morning, before breakfast, I had wandered to the pool with my rod; but a heavy rime kept him down. After breakfast the sky had clouded over, and I felt confident that this cast was my best chance in the whole water. I therefore reserved it as a *bonne bouche* for the end of the day. It was growing dusk when I delivered my line over the very inch where I knew he lay. The rolling boil-up and stiffened rod-point instantly followed, and I played my fish with great content. He was in shallow water, and quite spent, when the line seemed glued to the bottom, although I distinctly felt the salmon at the end of it. On creeping forward, I saw he had sneaked under one of these disgusting trunks, and being out of reach of the gaff, my only chance was, if possible, to raise the shore-end of the tree. As I attempted this, he put

out all his remaining spirit, and I broke, at the very close of it, the only fish I had raised on that last day. In spring the same year, when leading a clean salmon through a succession of rapids, I was arrested by a set-line, cunningly hung across the river by means of sunk stones. It was some time before I discovered the barrier, which was then easily disposed of. Even without these impediments, the length of time a salmon may baffle the rod-fisher is by no means a certain criterion of its dimensions. Some fish are far more game than others. The water also, or the banks, may so favour them, that a determined, plucky little fish may work fiercer, and even longer, than one twice its size. Others, again, have the generalship to avoid "spurts," and, by simply leaning their weight against the rod, to husband their strength. These cool-tempered ones, always wearing and rubbing the line on rocks and stones, are far more dangerous—especially to light tackle—than they seem.

One charming spring evening in March, when crossing Coilantogle Bridge, after minnow-trolling Loch Vennachar for trout, the fine trim of Garwhinnie water tempted me to try its best pool for a salmon. The stream of Garwhinnie takes its rise in Loch Vennachar, but soon joins Lennie water, nursed by Loch Lubnaig, when the junction forms the stately river of Teith. The clean spring fish that lie in both these streams, although very scarce, are large in size—generally from fifteen to twenty-five

pounds. They are chiefly taken by parr-trolling. Having tied a couple of salmon-flies for Teith the day before, they were, by mere accident, stowed in my hat; but I was forced to be content with the small two-handed loch-rod and fine trouting-gut. I had, however, slight expectation that my toy tackling would be put to the proof, and sauntered down Bochastle Heath, more for the pleasure of the evening walk than from hope of a happening fish.

The common saying, that success comes when least expected, may not be true. The surprise impresses it more on the memory, when failure would scarcely have been disappointment. In the present case, when a salmon sucked down my fly at the eddy formed by the rock in the middle of this pool, and the web of his tail proved him no minnow, my satisfaction was somewhat damped to feel the very slight bond that united us. The narrow stream stopped all risk of the trouting-reel being run out; but, though clear as silver, and fresh from the sea, the fish never attempted it. For two hours he only scraped the bottom or sulked, and when persuaded out of one deep linn, he floated down to its neighbour below, only to repeat the weary round of every stock and stone against which he could rub my chafing line. Twice, when tumbling over shallows, I could easily have clipped him, but had no gaff. At last, without a struggle on the fish's part, or a strain on mine, the worn and ragged casting-line

parted in two, and the little rod straightened in my hand. His weight was evidently from sixteen to twenty pounds.

When a boy, trolling Loch Lomond for yellow trout, I hooked a large clean salmon with materials as slender. He quietly followed my lead when I wound him up to the very stern of the boat, wondering what kind of accommodating creature I had got hold of. Under my very rod's point there was a sullen plunge on the top of the water, and that was all I saw of the first salmon I ever hooked. The practical lesson was worth far more than the fish—namely, never to come to such close quarters, *at first*, with so formidable a customer, especially when he seems much inclined to humour you: you are sure to have the worst of it.

In some of our northern rivers, such as the Ness, the underhanded up-stream throw is much in use. But the whole style of fishing is so ungainly and unsportsmanlike, that few gentlemen would willingly adopt it. The one great advantage consists in being able to fish water thoroughly hemmed in by trees. A very strong clumsy rod is required to "pitch" (for that is the proper term) the line up the stream. It is not allowed to circle behind at all, but the strong rod is giving the underhand forward motion to half of the line before the other half leaves the water.

As to up-stream trouting, many will reject it on account of the perpetual lashing it entails. There is this in its favour, though, that in trout-fishing, the more casts, the more rises. All good trouters are aware of this, and never put off time by leading their hooks, except in lochs and the still deeps of streams. When whipping for yellow trout, my advice is, to take a cast wherever you can get a good one, whether up, across, or down stream; to repeat them as often as possible, and never to drag your flies except in still water. I will quote the words of a little work on Tweed Angling, by an old fisherman, written years ago, to show that this has been the adopted principle of trouting for many a day. "Throwing the line for trout does not require the same regularity of plan and manner as the casting for salmon, since it is often more necessary to throw *aslant upwards* or straight across, than downwards. And indeed, in trout-angling generally, it is very improper to hang the fly on the stream, far more so to pull it against it. In fishing either stream or pool, cast the fly across, or slanting considerably upwards, and *let it float down the current of its own accord.*" Although the unintermitted "wapping" is not pleasant at first, yet with a small one-handed trouting-rod, few men of average strength will mind this when the arm has become habituated.

If the river falls *rapidly*, salmon or grilse never take well. A shine on the water also makes them

still. I have heard many fishers say that, on a dewy morning, salmon never rise well at the fly. I have now and then experienced the reverse, especially in hot July weather. After once going over thin dwindled water, it is useless to try again, as the fish are pretty certain to see you the first time. In some rivers which run chiefly through peat-mosses, fish seldom rise well when the water is of the highly-prized coffee-brown. This is worth attention; for whenever such rivers brighten up, they take famously. In July, when the days are sultry, fish are dull and sick with the tepid water, even in the late evening. Becoming very hungry after the cool of the night, morning fishing from five till nine is always most deadly then; earlier, is often too dull and grey. Before the weather grows so hot, the evenings are preferable, the day sun having warmed, but not heated the water, and his glare becoming mellowed or subdued. In decidedly cold stormy days at the beginning of the year, they take best, of course, in the middle of the day. When the air looks blue on a frosty evening, there is good chance of a fish rising; but when the mountains are veiled in their misty drapery, it is a very unpropitious sign. A brilliant day at the first of the season is not good, especially for red fish; a rough wind is best then. In spring, change from larger to smaller flies; in autumn, from less to larger. Always fish with larger flies in the evening than in the daytime; but

do not apply this rule to the early morning. At the opening of the season, even clean fish much frequent quiet water at the tail of the pools.

In boat-fishing a salmon-pool, begin at the foot; throw straight out across stream (not a point down, as from the bank); and by making the boatman row slightly aslant, and away from the pool, as it were sloping up stream, you have beautiful command of your tackle. The fly plays longer on the water, and by following the motion of the boat, rises the fish better, and, lastly, by keeping the line "stent," hooks more surely. In repeating each cast, always make the boatman work closer to the pool, starting away from it again as soon as the fly is delivered. When stream-fishing, especially if the current is strong, you must begin at the top, and fish down as from the bank; but in so doing the salmon can more easily detect the boat. Should the water be fine and clear, all river boat-fishing is apt to scare fish, if clean, into the pools above; and even red or grey fish will creep down into the pools below.

Hooked fish, fresh from the sea, however, are apt to turn down stream, and dash through rapids and cataracts. My two hardest races down the Dee were with salmon only a day or two out of the salt water. They spun through a succession of torrents, and the footing on my side the river being nothing but ragged rocks, the sight of smooth water at the end of the rapids was very welcome. I have a pretty vivid re-

collection of having my fun for reward at the close of one of these bursts. When the fish was half out of the water, on the sloping bank, I desired a young companion to lift it ashore. In doing so, the salmon slipped through the small fingers. In defiance of me and my screams, the single gut was seized, of course snapped, and the fish, an eleven-pounder, lolloped back into the river. I barely saved him; for the moment my little girl clutched the line, I threw down the rod, stood ready to cut off his retreat, and by a strong pitch of both hands heaved him ashore.

I was not so fortunate with a grilse a few months later. I had risen at four, and after killing three fish, hooked the grilse in the last pool I meant to try. As I never use a gaff if I can help it, I had led my victim over several shallows, stranding him at the end of a ready little creek. My rod was comfortably grounded, and I was within a yard of grasping the captive, when its hold broke. The moment the fish felt free, it seemed imbued with the spirit of half-a-dozen harlequins. Clearing the tiny bay like quicksilver, carefully avoiding an inviting deep which would have insured its destruction, the wonderful instinct of the creature guided it through a succession of intricate shallows, and in spite of my kicks it gained the channel of the river. I had the curiosity twice to examine this place, and had I not proved it, could scarcely have believed that any fish had wit enough to extricate itself from such a dilemma. What chiefly ex-

cited my wonder was, that a fish *in such a peril* should have purposely avoided deep water for shallows which it was so unlikely ever to thread. The shallows, however, led to the body of the river, and to freedom, while the tempting deeps, being enclosed on every side, were certain captivity and death.

In clear water, two flies on your cast, *unless small*, will often make salmon shy. There is no more killing bait for trolling than gold or silver fish; but, from their gay look, if salmon do not bolt *at* them, they will bolt *from* them. The same may be said of salted herring-fry. When salmon get accustomed to their bright glare, they fly the parts of the river where they are used.

The wholesale net-murder, in some of our best rod-rivers, must have been noticed with disgust by all salmon-anglers. If a remedy is not found for this slaughter, the rod-fisher's occupation will soon be gone. The lower fishings suffer first, the dearth of fish gradually extending to the higher. As long as the run continues, of course the lower stations have the first chance. The sport is then often good; but when the run ceases, the tables are turned. I have then seen the lower water nearly empty, when there was good sport twelve miles above. The reason is sufficiently plain. The first of "the run" rush to the top of the river, and occupy it; those that follow take possession of the next pools and streams; and so on, till the run is exhausted. In former years, at

the proper season, nearly the whole river was tenanted by these "back fish." How stands the case now? When the run stops, scarcely the half of some of our finest salmon or grilse rivers have a fair complement of "back fish," while only a meagre sprinkling condescend to inhabit the lower water, how inviting soever both stream and pool may appear. I have often noted this on the Dee, where, at the end of a salmon or grilse run, the sport was good at Ballogie and Aboyne, while there was scarcely a fin near Banchory.

A scarcity of fish is a still greater drawback at the end of summer and beginning of autumn. At that season all the finest salmon take possession of their pools for the winter, and are called "potted fish." Of course they are always at home—may be easily raised—but are far more shy of taking hold than fresh-run fish. If they do fasten, they often hook slightly. An indifferent angler may move them day after day, and scarcely fix one. There is fine scope, however, for a scientific craftsman, who, by judiciously tying or selecting flies to suit the varying moods of the water, and choosing the most propitious weather and time of day for fishing, generally secures a fair proportion of these, the largest salmon in the river. It is most tantalising to see an autumnal leviathan flounder up, tumble over the fly, and never even touch it.

At the end of August, when the Dee was dwindled to a thread, and the salmon fairly "set up" for some

time, I rose an old fish about dusk, with a sombre small fly. After waiting till nearly dark, I fastened the same fly to the thinnest trout-gut, and soon fixed him. Instead of turning down stream, as he would most likely have done if fresh-run, he bored up against a confined rapid current, the weight of which was too much for my slender tackle, and snapped it. Early next morning I was at my friend again, armed with the purest salmon-gut. The sky was cloudless; and, while deliberating whether to run the risk of disgusting him with the stronger tackle, he flapped his head and shoulder above water. This, with the bright sun and clear river, decided me. Discarding the salmon-gut, I whipped on a gossamer cast again—hooked and lost him in the same way! I never saw this fish again; and as he had two hooks and gut-lengths attached to his jaw, no doubt he was frightened out of the pool.

When the water was in much better trim, I fixed another of these old fish in the middle of the day. Being but tenderly hooked, he soon slipped off. I tried him at five o'clock next morning—hooked him firmly—and, after some very spirited play, his hold broke when I was leading him unresistingly through the shallow. The day following, about two o'clock, I was at this pool, with little hope of success. To my surprise, I fairly hooked and landed the same salmon. Some, I know, will shake their heads, with, "A different fish, no doubt." My proofs to the contrary are strong. First, it was so early in the autumn that there

were very few salmon much discoloured by the fresh water, and no potted ones that I had yet seen. At the very first rise I noted how much he was darkened by being long in the river, and saw at once that he had chosen his winter pool. Next, when hooked both the former times, I calculated his weight between ten and twelve pounds; when I secured him, he almost touched the eleven pounds. Lastly, he never left the pool at all—was finally killed in it—and *no other fish supplied his place.* This I made sure of by constantly throwing a cast over the pool in passing, and fishing it blank to the end of the season. Upon mentioning these facts shortly after to a Dee angler of thirty years' practice, he capped them by a feat of his own, well known to the old fishers of the place. He hooked a fifteen-pound fish at Banchory Bridge—worked him for half an hour—and lost him, when quite done up, by a piece of the gill giving way, which he found attached to the hook. Next day he again hooked a salmon in the same cast, and soon noticed a white mark on his lip. When brought to land, there was a hole corresponding exactly to the bit of gill on his hook the day before.

Another well-authenticated Dee-side story of former days has been told me. An old General hooked a salmon, which ran out all his wheel-line. The important knot at the line-end had been neglected, so he helplessly witnessed its disappearance through the rings into the rapid current. Ruefully wandering

back, he got a glimpse of some line floating in a quiet bay, about a mile below the place where he lost the fish. It was easily seized, brought through the rings again with great deliberation, and, of course, well-knotted. In winding up, to his surprise, the salmon was still attached to the fly, and easily landed.

Instances like the above show the exciting character of autumn rod-fishing, as well as the advantage of finding out the exact stations of these "back-end" salmon. How many of these tempting pools are tenantless now, that yearly used to harbour one or two of these sporting harvest-fish, anglers of the lower stations of some of our best rivers know to their chagrin. And, what is worse, the dearth of finny inhabitants will increase until some stringent restrictions are laid on the angler's great foe—the net. In all those rivers where netting is encouraged to anything like the present extent, not only will the salmon-rod soon be useless, except to hang an idle ornament in the hall, but the needy or greedy proprietors of fisheries will find they have outwitted themselves—that their rents are growing less year by year, until they end in being merely nominal.

Salmon-anglers are regarding with much interest the artificial propagation of salmon in the Tay and other rivers where the experiment is being tried; but whether the increase will ever reward the trouble of raising them, has yet to be proved.

My late brother imported ova of Geneva trout to

be hatched in the salmon-breeding ponds at Rossdhu. It was intended to stock the Arrochar moor-lochs and also Loch Lomond with these magnificent foreign trout. About 200 young fry were introduced into Lochs Sloy and Garable some years ago, but have not made any appearance yet. Indeed there has been no *decrease* in the number, or *increase* in the size, of the Loch Sloy trout; for my sons, in four hours' fishing, captured twenty dozen last summer, no bigger than I remember them when a boy—proof sufficient that the foreign intruders have as yet made no impression on the Arrochar Highlanders. The watchers have never detected one monster trout all last season in either loch. We neglected, however, to prove the point by trolling, although we had a small skiff for the purpose on Loch Garable.

The Rossdhu ponds were often sadly poached by a heron. Being unsuccessful in his attempts to shoot it, my brother suggested to the head keeper to try a "bogle." The effigy was soon most imposingly dressed in trousers, vest, and swallow-tailed coat. Next day, the inventor went to inspect his handiwork, when the pirate was luxuriously perched on the bogle's head!

Should salmon-breeding fully succeed, it will no doubt be adopted in all our first-class salmon-rivers. To stock a stream originally destitute of this fish, would be a signal triumph; and some people are even sanguine enough to attempt it. I rather think they

are expecting too much, and that—like the effort of my patriotic grandfather, the late Sir John Sinclair, to enliven the Caithness moors with nightingale music —after the first migration the fish will come back no more to a stream which their previous neglect showed to be unsuitable to their habits. Sir John's plan was excellent, *had it only succeeded.* He employed London bird-fanciers to procure nightingale eggs, and Caithness shepherds to find the nests of the equally soft-billed robin-redbreast. The London eggs soon displaced the Caithness ones, and robin carefully hatched and reared the embryo melodists. In summer, numbers of young nightingales were seen about the bushes, but at the autumn migration they disappeared, never to return.

Before the Tay spawning-boxes had so thoroughly proved the identity of the parr and salmon, I shut up three parr in a spring-well in July. The summer following, two were alive, of a dark-green shade. Next April, when they cleaned out the well, only one fish remained. The parr marks were still apparent; but it had grown much bigger, was large-headed, and very dark in colour. This last also disappeared soon after. Unlike burn-trout, which soon become quite familiar, and eat greedily any food thrown to them, these parr generally hid at the bottom of the spring, and were very shy.

The following make-shift is inserted for the benefit of the luckless wight who may have the misfortune

to break the top of his rod at the water-side, and neglected to bring a spare one. On the morning of my last day's fishing of the Echaig, I hooked a four-pound sea-trout on my bob, and when the fish was quite spent, the trail-fly fastened on a rotten stump. I waded in to try to disengage it, and, in so doing, carelessly strained back my rod over my right shoulder. The fish gave a languid plunge, and, of course, broke the top. Although I had only some thread and a pair of scissors, I cut a couple of twigs, and spliced my rod, as clumsily as ever a country surgeon bungled a poor man's leg. With my maimed instrument I killed two fine salmon and several sea-trout. I had fished since July, and bagged two hundred and fifty-seven sea-trout, many very large, and twelve salmon and grilse, with the same top, and little expected to break it the last day, when I was particularly anxious to do great things. A few years ago, the same mishap befell me when fishing in Loch Drunkie. At the beginning of the day, a large yellow trout rose, and was fixed, just under a perpendicular bank. Not being able to land the fish without throwing back my rod too far, I snapped the top, though I secured my prey. Nothing daunted, I mended my rod with a bit of twine, and killed five more fine trout. I question if, either day, I should have had better sport had no accident occurred.

AUTUMN ANGLING ON THE LYON.

WHEN tenant of the shootings of Garth, in Perthshire, in the summer of 1858, I had obtained leave, through the interest of my kind landlord with the liberal proprietor, to fish salmon over nearly the whole of the river Lyon. The privilege, so freely accorded, was no common boon; for, in addition to the high rate at which salmon-angling is now held, this river flowed through a singularly picturesque district of oak-wood, moorland, and mountain; while the well-separated and finely-defined pools gave ample scope for a full and powerful cast.

As comparatively few of the larger fish ascended the higher waters of the Lyon, I seldom wandered above the heavy streams, where the best salmon, when in the river, were sure to lodge. The upper stretch was, however, to many, the more tempting half; for, in addition to the romantic scenery, each

good pool or stream teemed with keen and lively grilse.

Garth House was about six miles from the nearest upper salmon-pool of the beat. The remaining ones, at longer or shorter distances from each other, extended some miles higher. After them, a stretch of very moderate water ended in the fine grilse-casts above Meggernie Bridge.

When the days were long and fine, the walk along the Lyon's banks and braes was wonderfully pleasant; but towards the "hint o' hairst," as the weather began to break and the light early to fail, a small spring-cart and pony, hired from the "general merchant," added much to the comfort, and, by saving time, even to the success of a salmon day.

Tommy, the pony, a fat strawberry dumple, and his driver, a stout lad of fourteen, had a perfect sympathy with each other's feelings and failings. Both were squat, good-tempered, selfish, shrewd in economising trouble, and pre-eminently lazy. To do Danie justice, he was a sagacious monkey, his intense love of country gossip having even a slight smack of the antiquary; and, in truth, the drive up Glenlyon afforded a fair field for his imagination and memory. From the gushing waterfall on Chesthill Brae, with its mouldering brig, the ruinous tower of Carnibarn, the old Popish kirkyard, the eleven elm-trees,—called, if I remember rightly, "The Daughters of Glenlyon," and which formerly did duty as mile-

stones,—to the fat farmer, within a trifle of 7 feet, whose weight turned a beam of 30 stone, Danie had always subjects for our admiration—or wonder!

Three weeks of warm July days had dwindled the Lyon to a thread when I saw it first, and on asking a resident on its banks his opinion of its angling capabilities, I received the following *very* encouraging reply: "Oh! you mustn't expect to do great things; but if it comes a fresh, there's *one* pool where you *might* get a fish, if you were getting up at two o'clock in the morning." Pleasant prospects!

An almost uninterrupted succession of dry sunny weather still kept down the river until the Lammas floods. When the water was slightly swelled by a few refreshing showers, only some of the deeper pools came into low trim, quickly falling back again to their thin clear state. The Garth keeper, however, being well acquainted with the upper water, and also having a good idea both of the size and colour of the salmon-flies, no time was lost, when the clouds now and then grudgingly favoured us with their driblets. Long before they were needed, I had tied, by the light of the glorious July sun, every variety of summer and autumn salmon-fly that the river in its most exacting state could demand.

A previous day and night of rain brought the keeper at the end of the month to say there was "plenty water." On running down to the river-side,

it was too thick and "drumly" for fly, and an old roadman volunteered the advice that "she was ower big for fishing." Better too big than too small, thought I; so the casts for to-morrow were carefully arranged, with rod, gaff, and bag ready at a moment's notice.

Next morning we were off for the high pools at eight o'clock, in spite of a hazy atmosphere and drizzling rain. While plodding past the first clachan, a shoemaker said something in Gaelic to a knot of gossips around him. "What's that, Mac?" "He jist says, sir, we may turn aboot hame, for ye might as weel throw a flee on the hee-road as on the Lyon the day."

I am afraid this well-meant hint did not produce the effect intended, but very much the contrary. Our only reception of the prophecy was to march defiantly up the brae.

The first pool, a long and likely one, I swept over with great caution. Few anglers, indeed, begin to fish carelessly; but it is the test of a skilled hand that his patience and wariness never fail, and so he is never taken by surprise at the sudden bolt of a royal fish. Genuine and spurious anglers may readily be distinguished by the calmness and temper of the former in working a difficult river, where fish are scarce and hard to move; while the latter soon lose heart, and before the day is half over fairly give in. Fishers of this last stamp may be keen enough when

fish are numerous, and on the rise; but it is only the gifted few who, after a long and barren day, will deliver their first and final casts with equal vigour and precision.

Not a fin stirred in this promising bit of water to my crow-wing fly, neither did a dark mottled turkey-feather prove more alluring. A white trout, however, rose in the pool above. Mac, who was apt to be sanguine, affirmed it was a grilse; but we could not decide the point, as it refused to show again.

The next two casts were my special favourites. They are considerably apart: one, flowing close to the road, is deep, confined, and eddying; the other, half a mile upward, gave scope for one of those splendid sweeps of the line which is the delight of the salmon-angler's heart. But, alas! changes of dark flies did not even excite a contemptuous "bell-up." The lighter lures of grey turkey-wing, and brown hackle, and argus-wing with red hackle, only fixed three yellow trout about half a pound each, which, instead of being welcomed, did but disgust me with light flies for the rest of the day.

I had now carefully searched every pool and stream to the top of the beat, without one break of a salmon. There remained only time to skim over a few pet casts on the return—our last chance of cheating the brogue-maker's spell. The free upward pool, where the yellow trout were so officious, had been twice tried with varied lure. It had scarcely rested an hour, still I

could not resist a third attempt with the crow-wing. At the throat of the stream, where I had so shortly before taken especial pains with this same fly, up came the salmon, sucked down the hook, and was firm and fast. It made a fine run, and when landed was nearly ten pounds, and clear as silver.

The homeward water was tried with equal pains and change of fly, but there was not another offer all day. In passing the cottages, the shoemaker prophet of evil met us on the road with "Whaur's the salmon?" in English. Mac, who espied him at a distance, had slyly slung the bag out of sight. He replied with a grin, "In the bag," and nodded over his shoulder. "So ye hae," was the rejoinder; "atweel, I wudna hae thocht."

In some rivers, such as Spey, where salmon are constantly moving, the second fisher has nearly as good a chance as the first, and a man may often hook a salmon in a pool which shortly before he had drawn blank. Such rivers, however, are rather the exception than the rule, and in by far the greater number of salmon-streams, after the water has been searched by an able angler, his successor's prospects are considerably blighted. On my next fishing-day, however, I had the satisfaction of picking up the worm from before the very beak of a "two o'clock in the morning" bird.

A close and sultry air made the whole *genus salmo* quite as stubborn as on my first introduction to the

Lyon; and although I swept the water leisurely up to the stream where I killed the salmon a few days before, the only offers were the splash of a playful grilse, which declined to continue the game, and the fix of a really good river-trout which slipped off.

On reaching the bank of my fortunate pool, the sun opportunely glanced on the brass reel belonging to an uncouth rod, evidently hid in a hurry among the rank grass. A pair of hobnail boots peeping out from under "the busses," as Mac calls the whins, quickly revealed the owner of the rod, and we unkennelled the comical old "bellman," who shammed a nap to perfection. He had been out since the dawn, he said, but "hadna steered a fin or seen a fish a' day." To punish old Slyboots, a fine salmon floundered up at this moment before us, as if to give him the lie direct. The confusion on "Bell-tow's" face and the smirk on Mac's were rare fun. He saw at once that the old man had not only seen this fish, but (as we afterwards were told by the Meggernie keeper was fact) had most likely thrown over it, and was "waiting on" for another trial when he heard our approach. His tactics, then, were to hide himself; and if found out, to feign sleep, but at all events to conceal from us that there was a *feeding salmon* in the pool.

Taking post about twenty yards above the fish, I threw cautiously over him with my dark fly, and at the first free sweep he sprang beautifully and fastened. He first struck across the stream, and then made some

fine bursts up and down the pool before I could tire him. In the thick of it I heard the old man's "Gie't line! gie't line!" to which, of course, I paid no respect, Mac vainly trying to keep him quiet. When gaffed, this salmon proved a twelve-pounder, and fresh from the sea.

The bellman had no less than three flies on his cast, only about a foot apart! But even had they been well separated, or fished with singly, none of them, I am convinced, would have had much chance of hooking a Lyon salmon.

The hot day and hard work made a draught from the spring at the nearest farmhouse very delicious; and the luxury of "a drink" is enhanced by sucking it through our *patent* drinking-horn—the hollow bone of a roe's fore-leg.

Sunning himself close to the spring, a stone-blind man was making pirn-lines in the most dexterous manner I ever saw. He also had a little workshop, and coopered pails, "bowies," &c., remarkably well. I bought a trout-line from him as a curiosity, and a neat "cogue" to water the pony with from the road-side burns. This blind man supports himself in comfort even in a lonely Highland glen.

The last fishing-day with Mac was unfortunate. At the tail of the first pool, hitherto a barren one, I hooked a salmon. It was lost entirely by Mac missing his first gaff, and being too nervous to take advantage of a second chance, after which the fish broke

its hold. I had four more rises in different pools, but no fastens, although I spared neither time nor change of lure to effect one. A fine sky and good water, but fish rose shyly, and only nipped at the fly.

August was nearly ended, the weather settling again after the floods, and river getting small. From the scanty water there were only two pools I had much trust in, so I paid them a stately visit in the "general merchant's" equipage. In one of these pools I sprang a fish five times, fixing him at the fifth offer, and losing him from being tenderly hooked. In the other I killed a small fish of six pounds, but very clean and handsome.

After a tract of fine harvest-days the skies overcast, and weather broke into continued heavy rain. The first fair morning I rode up the glen alone on the lazy strawberry cob, and found the water in good large ply. I had scarcely wetted my line before the clouds gathered, and poured down their bucketfuls. The river soon began to wax, which of course kept down the fish, although I tried the best casts with large and likely flies.

Expecting a friend to dinner, and time being nearly "up," I was giving a closing sweep to the tail of the "road pool" before trotting home, when at this *mal-apropos* moment a splendid salmon hooked! The casting-line being only fine single gut, the first touch of my fish proved that, to land him, he must be worked for with patience and caution. From the roughness

and steepness of the bank, the safest although most tedious course was, if possible, to prevent the monster from leaving the pool. As he proved "a sulker," there was little difficulty in detaining him, but his phlegmatic temper was such a stress on mine as sorely to tempt me to risk my vantage-ground in the fight, when two farm-hinds who had been watching from a distance walked deliberately down to the opposite bank, and set themselves doggedly to see it out. All thoughts of hurrying the salmon, at the risk of the light tackle, were now given up. My friend might be hungry, and the dinner spoiled, but the gaping clodpoles should never see me break my fish.

After nearly two hours' wary work, the victim became so weak and docile as to allow itself to be guided to the bank. The sight of the white gravel, however, always roused its ebbing energies to dart again into the deep. At every dash away from the shore, the laugh of the onlookers was hearty and undisguised, until at last I shut them up by stranding a beautifully-shaped sixteen-pound salmon on the sloping shingle.

My ride home would have been lengthy, had I not applied the only incentive to diligence Tommy respected —viz., a sharp spur. His master used to boast that he never tired or fell off in condition. This panegyric always reminded me of a lazy "minister's man" whose master had turned him off for this fault alone.

The minister (who assured me "he would not tell a fib for all the world"), having occasion to be from home the week before the term, knew that his factotum would do literally nothing when he was absent, unless he bribed him with a good character. He therefore wrote in large text the words, "Sober, honest," &c., and wound up by "he gives sure evidence of being a very durable servant"—double-dashing the last three words. The "man" was delighted with his certificate, particularly the compliment at the end, promised to do all justice to the glebe till his master's return, and kept his word.

My friend met me at the door of Garth House, accepted the fish as sufficient apology for my late return, admired it to my heart's content, and expressed his determination (as he had never seen a salmon landed) to accompany me on the next fishing-day.

On the 13th of September the spring-cart was early at the door. Including charioteer Danie, we were a party of five, to Strawberry Dumple's intense disgust, who firmly held with the doctor, when ordered to swallow a box of his own pills, that "one of us was a dose" up Glenlyon brae. He evidently seemed to think our unwonted weight a bitter pill; and both he and his master tacitly agreed to walk all the way, unless when we coaxed them into a shambling amble now and then *down hill.*

As our friend wore thin shoes, and the walk from the cart to the first pool was damp, we agreed that I

should try it alone, and the party drive on and wait for me at the "road pool," about a quarter of a mile farther forward. Hitherto I had been unfortunate in this pool, having lost the only fish I ever moved in it. This time, however, a heavy salmon rushed up at the tail of the stream and hooked firm. He made a noble spurt to begin—then bored up rapids—struck across river—sulked, and played all his tricks and vagaries. After an hour's severe play, he managed, in spite of me, to roll over the waterfall into the pool below. Still through this danger I kept him safe, and was in the very act of raising his unresisting head on the gravel when his well-worn hold parted! With a languid plunge he vanished amid the foam, and I rejoined my companions with a malediction on that "unchancy" pool.

The account of my mishap whetted our guest's appetite to witness the mysteries of a salmon-run. Each stream and pool to the top of the beat was, however, a failure, not even the excitement of a rise rewarding my labour and his patient watching. On the return I could evidently see that my friend's interest in the sport was gone, and his attention had quite flagged. A graceful bend of the river, or sudden rise of the opposite hill—the white clusters of the hazel or coral berries of the rowan-tree—each in turn had far greater attraction for the contemplative man than perpetual lashing for salmon who treated all our overtures with silent contempt.

For the second time we pulled up at my favourite "road pool," but a prolific hazel copse had tempted all our party under its shade, save one who held my gaff. At the very top of the eddy, and to the first throw, up bolted a salmon. It made some fine rushes, then suddenly tamed, and was easily "clipped." A small clear fish of seven pounds. A short tract of dry weather again lowered the Lyon. Before another "fresh" our friend had left us, and to this day has never had the satisfaction of "being in at the death" of a salmon.

Close-time of this season seemed to have been considerably anticipated by settled dry weather. For the last few days that remained, rain appeared hopeless in the face of a high barometer. I had contentedly put up my fishing-gear till next year, when a sudden and unexpected drenching rain caused a fine flow of the river. Danie and I were of course off betimes for the high water, and the "unchancy" pool surrendered a first victim. It was only six pounds, but, being body-hooked, made as sporting a run as many a fish triple its weight. Rose another in the "road pool," which declined to move a second time, and then drove to the long free stream below the blind man's house. On remarking to Danie taht our line-making machine was absent from his "settle" at the gable of the house, he naively answered, "I see'd him *looking* oot o' his window."

The long stream is delightful fishing, pleasant even

when one does not see a fish. On this fine angling day I cautiously tried the confined current at its top, and carefully raked the swirling eddies of the opposite bank, but it was not until the broadening waters at its close demanded the full pitch of an angler's powers that a beautiful salmon sprang. When fixed, he rolled round and round on the surface, lashing the water with his tail. After he got down I wondered at the want of energy and pluck in so good a fish, for before ten minutes' play he came sweetly to bank on his broadside. Danie held the gaff, and in his eagerness ran down to the salmon. "Now, take time," quoth I, "and clip him true the first trial." Judge my horror when the urchin seized the instrument in both hands, and came down upon the salmon's body as if he meant to fell an ox! Of course the fish sweltered into the stream again, and the wonder was that Danie's savage onslaught had not snapped the line. Soon, however, the monster came floating in sideways again, when, disarming my ally of his weapon, I gaffed it myself. The monkey came grinning up, without apology or shame, shouting merrily, "I never see'd the like o' that afore." The fish weighed thirteen pounds, and was so quickly overcome from having, in the first struggle, twisted the gut round its gills, and thus drowned itself.

My last two angling-days of the Lyon having now really come, I determined, by being early at the

lowest pool, to make the most of them. I was forestalled, however; and a precautionary survey disclosed a brother of the craft, who had come to grief by breaking his line. He was seated mending his tackle, totally unconscious of my discovery, and most likely before he was set up again his rival was out of sight with a clear lead of the water. But this sharp practice availed little, for not a fish showed until I got to the stream above "the wooden brig," the highest cast of our salmon-beat. There I moved a dark old fish three times. He began by a free dash at my black fly, then refused. Rested him some time, and tried him with a lighter; but only a head appeared this time. Another rest, and refusal of same fly, so gave him a brighter lure still. This last was only noticed by a sluggish "bell." Waited some time, changing flies and resting; but when salmon spring briskly at first, and become duller each succeeding rise, they are very apt, as in the present instance, finally to refuse altogether. When, on the contrary, the first rise is lazy, and the second more active, look sharp for the third offer, and take it coolly. The spin of the pirn-line will most likely prove its pleasing sequel!

On the return, not even a white trout stirred until I regained the low pool, which my alert Waltonian brother had already skimmed. A sly peep at an angler in difficulties, however, has generally an effect on his successor to the pool the very reverse of a

damper. Heedfully, therefore, the rough sharp stream was fished down till it deepened and steadied, when a heavy fish followed the fly with one of those sweeping rolls deemed by many knowing anglers a hint that in their case rest-time between the casts is superfluous ceremony. Instantly clapping the fly again before the salmon's nose, a furious rush and tightened line proved that I had read him right. He never sulked nor parleyed, but fought bravely on, doing his best to break his chain. A game customer like this is soon subdued, and in less than twenty minutes a 12½-lb. harvest-fish lay gasping on the grass. During the struggle I twice saw its paired neighbour feeding in mid-stream; and whenever I had cut the hook from the dead fish's jaw, I offered it to the lively relict in the pool. It came at once, but hooked so tenderly that one dash parted the slight catch.

Although I did not land a fish, the final day of the Lyon has left as pleasing reminiscences as any of its predecessors. A balmy morning and dry road tempted me to steal "cannily" up the glen on foot, more to enjoy a peaceful farewell of the now familiar river, than with much hope of hooking a fish in water so thin and clear.

When I sauntered down to the first pool, I found Chesthill's fisherman giving it the finishing touches; and he told me that another well-known Lyon angler had had "his wull o't" shortly before, but nothing

had moved to either of them. The tiny state of the river was warrant enough for "ill luck," and I had turned away to seek some of the deeper linns which might not have been already raked, when the man begged me to try this pool once more. "Three times was canny," and although they had "dune naething, he would like weel to see't cuisten owre by me."

To please him, I put on my lightest tackle and threw right across to the farther side with a long and even sweep. Near the tail of the pool the heaviest water runs close to the opposite bank. This was the critical bit, as both the fisherman and I knew full well. To fish it properly required a most powerful throw; and yet, from the still, clear state of the water, the fly ought to fall like gossamer. At the second attempt of this difficult cast, a large red-tinged salmon fearlessly came and hooked. Quickly shortening the line by getting opposite his head, I thought I had my captive safe, when he suddenly vaulted a foot clear of the river and shook himself free. A spectator and witness *is* a comfort when a heavy fish *breaks its hold*, perhaps not when it breaks the casting-line!

Moved two more salmon in the long pool below the blind man's house, and touched one of them sharply at second rise, but his neighbour refused to come again. Nevertheless, from the scanty water and bright sky, I had reason to be satisfied that any fish deigned to notice my fly on the last Lyon day of 1858.

Perfect contentment with a few salmon-rises and an empty fishing-bag, by way of *finale* to an angling season, can hardly fail to suggest "the glorious nibble" of a brother enthusiast. Moving large fish, however, is held by every true angler only second to hooking them; but many persons are apt to despise the most skilful and patient efforts unless crowned with immediate success, and to such the plaintive wail of an old craftsman, when asked what he had caught, may suggest no unworthy moral—"*Nothing but twigs!*"

A salmon-fisher is deemed by those who watch him, as the river statue of patience. But making allowance for the different tempers of men, the fisherman's patience is generally in fair proportion to his knowledge of the sport and practical skill. These qualities are needed to insure self-reliance, without which, patience in the art of angling would be only foolish endurance.

The general rules for salmon-fishing apply to all rivers, as they are much the same with regard to flies, the best moods of the water and times of day for angling, on the top, in the middle, or at the bottom—viz., with fly, minnow, or worm. Almost every river has, however, some peculiarities taken advantage of by the local fishers, but which every able wielder of the rod, especially if he has a fair amount of general practice, will quickly master. This is fishing knowledge, and only to be learned by long and keen ob-

servation. An active young man of good hand and quick eye, with some enthusiasm, will soon be taught dexterity, which consists in the power of commanding any water, whether by casting a very long line, or, in difficult streams, by pitching the fly between every small opening among trees, scarcely ever catching a twig—at other times throwing it clear of the overhanging rocks with such unerring aim as rarely to break a hook.

Any one having both fishing knowledge and manual skill (for some reputed good anglers possess only one of these gifts), is seldom tried in his patience, because he is able to make use of his fishing time, not wasting it on the water as inexperienced anglers are apt to do, when success is more than doubtful. Of course, there are many men of little leisure, who generally need the services of some local "regular," to whose guidance they trust implicitly. Such fishers are not likely to gain self-confidence, or ever to become scientific craftsmen.

A salmon-fisher, to be self-reliant, ought to require no more than to know the February flies of any river he means to fish from the first to the last of a season. He will know how to change both size and colours of fly to suit not only the varying moods of the water, but also the advancing year. Upon comparing the enormous hook of the opening month with the tiny fly required for the clear water of June or July, such fishing prescience may appear marvellous to the un-

initiated; but, like other changes, it has been so gradual, that the fisher himself scarcely perceives how it came about. Had he dropped his rod for a couple of months, he might have had difficulty in picking up the fly again, and most likely, to save time, would have resorted to one of the fishermen of the district for a fresh start. I speak from experience; for having rented five miles of northern Dee for three years—as difficult a river to fish as any in Scotland—I never required more than to know the opening fly of the season, or when I came later, the fly then in use. In 1855, without any other advice or assistance than this, I landed fifty-five salmon from the 6th of March till the 15th of May, but then I had a splendid assortment of feathers and tackle, and tied flies to suit myself every morning.

OCTOBER ON THE STINCHAR.

THE October floods of the Stinchar come pretty regularly, sometimes allowing the river to empty itself between the large "spates." When unbroken, heavy water lasts without intermission, the fish are so much knocked about that they become dull and languid, until they have been given a rest by the lowering of the river. Our first flood, about the 10th of the month, was from "bank to brae," and the pools were not in fishing order until the afternoon of the second day. The river was even then in far too tumultuous a state to suit my taste; but my second son rose a salmon twice, with a large showy fly, in the "slack water" of our mid-pool, named the "Scaur."

This "Wheel," as it is called, is rather confined, but very deep, and when the river is large, shelves off on either side into shallow eddies, very alluring to fish when the force of the current prevents their keeping

the main stream. No variety, in either size or colour, could tempt this salmon to show himself again, and not another fin would stir in any other part of our water.

On the next morning, before breakfast, the same rod rose the fish of the previous day; and the river having lowered in some measure by noon, I took my rod, giving him two changes of fly, without success. As a last resource, I gave him the "wind over" which induced him to give a fine deliberate roll from the bank between the deep and shallow water. The fish was, however, again stubborn, and my only other rise was a sea-trout, attracted by my salmon-fly in the still water of "Dub-a-nee," our highest and choicest pool, which I landed.

At daybreak my son again found his way to the Scaur, when his fish came up so keenly that he felt certain of a "fix" next time. He was only 8½ lb. weight, but proved a fine clean salmon, having made spirited play for fifteen minutes. This was counted our first fish of the season, for we agree with the Fishing Guide of the Tweed, in his distinction of terms. On an Englishman's landing what he called a "fish" on the bank, the old man gave it a contemptuous kick—muttering, "Ye dunna ken a bit gilsh whan ye see ane afore ye."

More rain fell, and the water rose high again. As usual, my son was at the bank of the river by daylight. In Dub-a-nee he hooked at the first offer

another clean salmon of 9 lb., and late in the day its facsimile. The first was easily landed; but the fish of the evening made several strange gambols, ending by boring round a tree, surrounded by an eddy, on the opposite bank. This fish would have been lost, without a doubt, if a spectator had not been able to untwist and set it free. An old farmer wandered down from his turnip-field, was satisfied the angler had caught only a branch, and asking no questions, quietly returned to his work. The next day, on being "chaffed" for his want of interest in the sport, he retorted in his Ayrshire *patois*, "I thocht it was the tree ye had cotched."

The first rain brought chiefly small fish, but the giants were not long in following. October was now advancing, and the first night-frost whitened the ground after a day of heavy showers. Although the pools were in capital order, the night-rime effectually prevented the fish, before breakfast, from rising to the most tempting changes of fly. About noon, however, when the sun was warmest, a light breeze and fleecy clouds gave promise of a favourable day.

We divided the water, my son taking the low pools, named the "Duckat Wheel" and the "Bridge Wheel," while the Scaur and Dub-a-nee, the higher ones, fell to my share. As the Scaur was well sheltered from the noontide sun, I was anxious to go over Dub-a-nee, in order to take advantage of the clouds floating lightly in the sky, fitfully

shading his beams. Unlike my usual custom in autumn, I began with a large hook, orange, yellow, and black body, having a fine mottled, dark turkey wing. About twenty minutes are needed to fish Dub-a-nee properly; and, after the last cast had been made, of course it disappointed me that no fish had deigned even to notice my lure.

Sitting down on the bank, I chose out of my fly-book a much smaller hook, composed of a claret and purple body, and red turkey wing. With this enticing fly, all the well-known eddies and sunk rocks were carefully searched, bringing me to the calm water at the foot of the pool. The whole of Dub-a-nee needs a long throw, but its broad shallow requires the full pitch of an expert hand.

I had cast within a yard of the opposite bank, bringing the fly round to the gravel on the near side, when a splash broke the still water, and the head and shoulders of an enormous fish tightening the line, made my heart beat. To shorten my line and get opposite his head was the work of a moment. The salmon, however, seemed quite disposed to give "fair play," for it only leaned its ponderous weight against the single gut, and steered steadily into the stream. My wish now was to coax him up the pool; for at the foot, only fifty yards from the place where he was hooked, was one of the most dangerous bits of water in the whole fishing beat. Slowly and with much trouble I gained yard after yard of the up-stream

until nearly opposite the tree which had so troubled my son.

Having now a good stretch of clear water below, I ventured to turn his head, but he quickly resented the liberty, by dashing down with tremendous speed, requiring all my efforts to appease him before he reached the dangerous ground which had wrecked the hopes of many a fisherman. I was again obliged to resort to the slow process of wearing up the river; but although the fish had been hooked for an hour and a half, he was as fresh as when he took the fly. A step behind was the river-watcher, in his easiest attitude, determined to see the game played out. A bluff, honest fellow, of few words, he did not speak or trouble me till he was addressed, when he brought cheering news of my companion below. "The young gentleman landed, a short time since, a beautiful clean fish in the Duckat Wheel," quoth he, encouragingly.

An hour more, and my son, attended by the game-watcher "Sandy," and a young river-prowler, from Colmonell, joined our company. A few minutes' rest was then given me, when my son took the rod; but even with this respite my arm was rather stiff after four hours' play of so heavy a salmon.

"That's the largest fish I have seen on a rod for several years," remarked the watcher, taking a keen interest in the proceedings.

My son proposed stoning him, which advice was

eagerly seconded by the Colmonell water-spirit. The watcher did not approve of this measure, however. and my consent was reluctantly given. The fish had never fairly sulked, and I always found it possible to move him at will, so that patience only was needed until he was so far subdued as to be safely turned down stream, and led past the rocks and sunk stumps of trees on the far side.

Large stones were now flung thickly at our victim, the game-watcher joining in the exciting "bicker." The fish, maddened by his persecution, started, winced, and then struck for the opposite shore, down which he darted with the speed of an arrow. No line could then curb him from the treacherous rocks; and getting on the far side of one, close to the gravel there, a foot above the surface, a scrape on its edge cut the line!

But for this insulting treatment, my huge salmon would have preserved good manners all through his trying ordeal, and merited the full compliment, only partially bestowed by a Celtic gillie on a Laggan fish, "She's playin' ceevil *noo!*"

The Colmonell "kelpie" was off in a twinkling, but the rest of the party remained to talk over the mishap. The game-watcher thought, from the length and strength of his play, that the fish must have been hooked by the body. He had never seen him clear of the water, though; and the river-guardian, who had twice watched a clean leap from the surface,

was of a different opinion, maintaining that he distinctly perceived this splendid salmon was fairly fixed by the mouth. The sequel will show that in all likelihood he was correct.

A fine dry night reduced the river to the smallest trim possible for fishing. The chief prospect of success, therefore, lay in trying an early cast, when my son hooked the only salmon he rose in the pool of Dub-a-nee, and in five minutes he was stranded on the shelving shingle. The fish was beautifully shaped, although his time in the fresh water had slightly tinged his colour with yellow. He rushed heedlessly round the pool with the furious folly of a Thames chub, and was, in consequence, tired out so easily.

Rain fell in ceaseless torrents until the following day at noon, when the clouds broke and the sun shone out gloriously. Of course, a tremendous flood followed, which prevented fly-fishing for twenty-four hours. Even after that time, there was so great a rush of madder-brown-coloured water, that I chose for my son's line a large, rather bright spring-fly. Three feeding salmon appeared at intervals in Dub-a nee—two seemed about 12 lb., and one in the far eddy we estimated at about 20 lb. in weight. The two lesser fish would not notice the lure; but the moment the long sweep reached the eddy, the large salmon sprang up beautifully and "fastened."

To play such a fish was the very luxury of angling.

He neither sulked nor spurted, but did his best to escape in fair battle, and in half an hour was safe on the bank, the angler having steadily refused Sandy's eager request to strike him with the gaff. He was a fine broad fish of 21 lb. One more sluggish "break" in the evening was all that followed, and the water being so large and muddy from the discharge of the moss-burns, I was contented with the humble post of spectator.

There were now only three days remaining of the rod-fishing on the Stinchar for 1870—though, happily, the river was still in flood.

A striking instance of the uncertainty of salmon-flies occurred during our last, and indeed our only fortnight of good fishing for the season. A fly of the previous year (1869), called "death," from its many captures when all others failed, hardly even rose a fish to us, and certainly did not kill one. Our most successful lure, hitherto, has been described already; but it seemed to me possible to improve it by enlarging the hook, and substituting a wing from the common kite's tail. This feather has a brighter and more delicate lustre in clear water, and is better seen even when the river is large or turbid.

The kite is now so rare that few fishing-tackle shops can boast of having this tempting feather, and the makers fill its place generally from the turkey, which makes an excellent, though not a better substitute, as they often allege. Many years ago I was

given a full tail of the kite by my old sporting friend Peter Robertson of the Black Mount, who always gave his best aids in my shooting and fishing expeditions. Times are changed since I can remember three kites' nests—one in an oak-tree on the lawn, and the others within a mile of my father's Highland home, while these ornamental birds are now almost banished from the mountains of Scotland.

The river was too full and muddy till noon, so I had time to dress four flies, two rather large, and the others a size less. We then set out for the afternoon and evening fishing, I using all the time one of my own imitations, while my son chose a stereotyped Stinchar hook, making several changes when the fish refused to notice his lure. Two small salmon moved to my fly in the pool of Dub-a-nee, and two good ones in the Scaur, the last all but hooking, as I struck sharply and turned him on his side. During all this time my neighbour rod did not incite a single offer.

Showers in the night kept the river in the same trim as the previous day, so my son was given the chance of the gled's tail *versus* the turkey-cock's! We divided Dub-a-nee fairly, and had each cast over more than half of our water when my companion called out that he had raised a splendid salmon. Of course he passed down ten yards without disturbing him further, and then fished blank to the end of the pool. Having failed to move anything with showy colours, I chose the small sombre fly which had

already done good service for my rod, while my comrade was to follow with the same hook which had started the fish. While making these arrangements, the river-watcher walked past, but without waiting to see the result, as we meant to give the salmon a long rest.

After sitting about an hour on the bank, I went carefully over the high part of the pool, sweeping my fly above the huge fish with most attractive jerks. No notice, however, was taken of them, so the first temptation was again offered by my neighbour rod, in the shape of the gled's tail. There was no shyness this time, for with the greediness of a shark he seized the hook, and both of us were instantly opposite the struggling monster. With the exception of a spirited rush at intervals, ending always in a dangerous shake or savage vault, the play was fair and even. Striking first up, and then across the stream, this strong and active salmon allowed himself to be turned whenever we approached difficult water, and began soon to hoist "signals of distress."

The angler had twice brought his victim within reach of Sandy's extended gaff, which he had hardly evaded by a languid sweep of the tail, when the watcher again hove in sight at "double quick" time, having caught a glimpse of the fight from a neighbouring knoll. However, he barely got "in at the death," for the fish made one more feeble effort to keep under water, and then floated to the bank,

an unresisting mark for Sandy's "clip." His weight was 23 lb., and the time taken from hooking till landing was three-quarters of an hour.

It was now the 31st of October, the last day of the season, and every angler with either right or leave to fish on any part of the river, was of course at his post. The water was low, but as the ground had been well saturated with the previous rains, there was hope of its keeping in fishing trim till the evening.

My eldest son had made an effort, by travelling all night, to have one day on the Stinchar; but by every exertion he only arrived in time for luncheon, his portmanteau and fishing-gear following. He had, however, carried his salmon-rod himself; so, after choosing one of my large reels, he joined us about two o'clock at the Duckat Wheel, our nearest pool. Dub-a-nee had been unsuccessfully fished after breakfast, so we advised him not to try again till four o'clock, when it would be free from sunshine.

Early in the day my second son had raised a large fish close under the bridge, and another about the same size moved to my rod in the Scaur. Each of them was tempted by the gled's tail, and both were touched. The Bridge Wheel fisherman had, however, broken his hook by contact with the stones; so, as the salmon could not have been pricked with the blunted weapon, he was booked for an evening trial. The right of the top part of this wheel *below* the bridge fell to my share, and the lower half to a

neighbouring farmer, but the fish rose exactly on our march. On the crest of the bridge were some officious onlookers, who ran at once to apprise the farmer of a feeding fish; when he hastened down with his rod, hooked, and lost the salmon by too great confidence in double gut and rough usage. So our only hope, faint though it was, rested in Dub-a-nee after sunset.

The water was growing very low and clear, when my eldest son threw his first cast with the small turkey wing, the least glaring fly in our collection. At the same confined swirl of the current, a dull wave under the hook gave token of the prize which lay below. A long rest followed; then a cast, light as thistle-down, allured the wary insect-watcher to repeat his effort, with the evident resolve to dally no longer with his prey. Immediately, a vindictive plunge revealed both his power and will to use it, by breaking free from so fragile a chain. To my dismay, I now saw that my son had chosen, by mistake, the lightest reel line in my possession, only intended for sea-trout or grilse, in the clearest water of July! Its length, however, was 100 yards; and having perfect confidence in the skill of the fisherman, I resolved not to flurry him with a warning, but to wait in patience until the prize was either lost or won.

The fish neither dashed round the pool in terror, nor refused to move in sullen indifference, but with a degree of calm dignity steered along the opposite

bank, giving fitfully a revengeful toss which made my heart flutter. Higher, higher, he rowed himself, till he arrived within a few yards of the overhanging trees. If he resolved to pass this barrier, I knew well the alternative was a broken line for the angler, or a jump to the shoulders in the rapid current. At this crisis the fish was turned by wary coaxing, and brought cautiously down to the deep water where he had been hooked. A new danger was here threatened, for the eddy tree appeared provokingly near, and it was likely the huge fish might strike across the river, twisting the line around its branches. Again he was foiled by the coolness of his tormentor, and the up-stream march was resumed.

The shades of evening now deepened, and my hopes of a daylight capture were over. The sky was, however, cloudless; not a breath stirred the leaves, and, to our delight, the glorious red harvest moon rose "broad" over the brow of the Ayrshire hills. We shall have him yet if we wait till midnight, thought I, as villager after villager rushed down from Colmonell to see the game played out. Being the only one of the group who knew the slender bond which united the fisherman with his fish, I watched the struggle with greater anxiety than any present, not excepting the angler himself.

Hour after hour passed away, but "Macfarlane's lamp" was bright in the sky, shedding full light on the river for the working of the salmon. It was

nearly ten o'clock at night before the noble fellow began to show symptoms of yielding. "Bring a lantern, Sandy, as he can never be gaffed by moonlight." Sandy was soon ready and eager with light and steel. The salmon, however, though nearly spent, refused to come within reach of his weapon, and kept lashing the water into foam on the opposite shore. Quick as thought, Sandy dashed across the black stream and reached the fish before he sank. Then poising the lantern for a second, up to his waist in the water, he struck his victim with deadly determination—a pause ensued—the light hissed in the river, and was extinguished. Then followed a severe unseen struggle under the darkened bank, when Sandy, with a grip like a bull-dog, dripping from head to foot, crawled from the deep, shouting, "I ha'e him noo!"

The confident predictions that he was body-hooked, hazarded by the spectators on account of his strong play, were soon falsified, for he was found to be beautifully fixed by the tongue. His weight was nearly 25 lb., proving the finest fish of the season landed by the rod on the Stinchar. Thus to find he was right, was a triumph to the river-watcher, who had always firmly maintained that my previous monster had been hooked by the mouth.

The latter, and another of much smaller size, were all which were lost to our rods after being hooked during 1871. Reports reached us every fishing day, however, both up and down the river, of fish breaking

their hold and escaping. Considering the practice of many of the fishermen, it did not surprise me to hear of such mishaps. They make use of double or even triple gut, "rugging" the salmon after the manner of a schoolboy hauling in perch.

To conclude this notice of our sport on the Stinchar, I will give a short sketch of the most exciting run with a salmon I ever watched. When it is certified that the top fish of that season was hooked by the *back-fin* and killed with *single gut*, the time taken to land him will appear wonderfully short. Indeed, when clipped at the shallow he was not nearly done up.

His weight was upwards of 30 lb., and I was assured by the residents on its banks that they never saw "a bigger fish ta'en oot o' the Stinchar." It was certainly the largest landed during the time we were there. It came twice to the gled's wing, being fixed at the second rise. I have it preserved in a case with the fly through the fin exactly as when hooked.

I had tied a fly for each of the rods, with a wing of our favourite gled's tail. The next morning we had breakfast by candle-light, in order to be at the pools by break of day. The pools are only four in number, so my eldest son and I took the top and middle ones, leaving the lowest, called the Duckat Wheel, to the youngest fisher. Before long a hasty messenger brought tidings that the latter had hooked

a heavy salmon. Leaving our rods, we ran down the bank to the Duckat, and saw that the angler had his work cut out for him for several hours. I never saw a fish played in better style, and the monster fighting for bare life made noble efforts to break his tiny chain of single gut. He bored, spurted, sulked, and, when rested, dashed up stream at railway speed, springing clear of the water, and coming down on it again with a tremendous crash.

From eight o'clock till one he showed no symptoms of yielding, and it was nearly two o'clock before he allowed himself to be taken down stream. My eldest son and our trusty follower Sandy, each armed with a gaff, were on opposite banks of the river, and seconded the fisher in leading down the salmon. As soon as he appeared within fifty yards of the lower ford, I called out, "Now, Sandy, leave the water; run for your life, and catch him at the shallow." It was an exciting moment when Sandy with his "clip" held low, his mouth firmly shut, and his keen eye fixed on the babbling current, the very picture of concentrated energy, sternly watched his prey.

Down and down steered the fish to the very jaws of his enemy; but, seeing the danger, he made a last languid spurt, and then permitted himself to be again guided to the fatal gaff. The stroke was given with cool determination, when, splashing through the water, and bent nearly double, Sandy dragged his prize to the shore, throwing his whole weight on the top of it.

LOCH SALMON-FISHING.

WHEN salmon-fishing in the Tweed many years ago, with one of the most scientific *habitués* of that river, I casually asked him whether a late celebrated Professor was really so good a fisher as he got credit for? He answered, with a shrug, "Oh, he's only a trouter." Had the speaker been *only a salmoner*, a plain inference might be drawn; but he was undeniably as expert at small fish as large. Indeed, I cannot conceive an adept at salmon-fishing who has not laid the foundation by a thorough knowledge of all the best modes of capturing trout. For my own part, I began at six years old, with a crooked pin and worm, to dabble for minnows and loaches, being gradually promoted to a hook and float for perch-angling; then ascending to burn-trout with bait, which naturally led the way to burn-trout with fly.

Once fairly entered at fly, my progress was rapid. I soon became dissatisfied with my basket unless it

contained some good ones; and when large yellow trout in summer became shy of rising to artificial flies, I changed the lure to minnows, and other natural baits. At this time, too, I was a keen and successful pike-troller, and these fresh-water sharks first whetted my taste for really big fish. Having the advantage, however, of being near some fairish sea-trout streams, one autumn convinced me that the *Salmo trutta* made the best sport of any fish I had yet tried. No doubt large, lazy, well-fed yellow trout were powerful rivals in spring, but they were only attainable with *bait* in autumn, when the reign of the white trout with *fly* began.

As I had opportunity, I tried a cast for grilse or salmon; but my knowledge of the habits of fish and my practice being alike limited, the rises were of course few and far between, so I always turned with increased zest to the fat yellow trout in May, or the silvery sea ones in September. It was not until I was thoroughly acquainted with the nature of fish, and had acquired perfect command of the salmon-rod, that the intense excitement of hooking a 20-pounder tamed down my interest for all minor angling.

With the exception of boat-fishing in strictly preserved rivers, angling for large fish, in order to reach the deep pools and heavy streams where they lie, requires a length of line which few can ever attain to throw. But when the river-banks are at the same time encumbered by trees or other obstacles, the rods

who can fish it well become select indeed. Of course the rises decrease in proportion to the want of power in reaching the casts; and the angler, however expert with a small rod and fly, loses confidence when he looks over his shoulder and sees a salmon struggling at his neighbour's line, hooked in the very pool he was unable a few minutes before to cast over. With the loss of confidence his patience also deserts him, and he returns to yellow trout, a stanch stickler for the theory that trouting is the most scientific of all fishing. But if a man has thorough mastery of a large rod, and quite comprehends the ways of the noble fish he is trying for—also the various moods of water, sky, air, time of day, &c., when the monster may be most successfully lured—the crowning requisite, patience, always comes of its own accord.

In ordinary rivers the most expert angler well knows that he must not expect many rises of big fish; he therefore uses all his skill and experience to hook those he *does* move. This attention constantly increases his stock of knowledge, until he feels certain he can hook them if they *can* be hooked.

Where the rises are more numerous, there is not the same pains taken to profit by them; and this natural consequence partly explains what I have also noticed in shooting—viz., that a man who has lived among preserves, far from being so good a sportsman, is frequently not even to be compared as a steady shot with another whose whole practice is over wild

unenclosed lands. The one blazes thoughtlessly away, committing time after time the same errors; while the other notes every miss, and endeavours to correct it next opportunity. There is also no doubt that both the angler and shooter who have to work and *think* for their sport, acquire a self-command and nerve only to be obtained in this school.

Although loch and river fishing seem distinct departments of the craft, yet the more closely they are studied the nearer do they approximate to each other. When white trout and salmon enter a fresh loch, if there is no stream large enough to ascend, they press to the mouths of the feeding burns; or should the loch itself be small, they first choose (as in rivers) the feeding-grounds farthest from the sea, those nearer gradually filling with "back fish." They have favourite rocks and banks all over the loch, exactly as they have favoured pools and streams in rivers. Lochs, as well as rivers, are most successfully fished when they fall after a heavy flood. In some places of a loch, like some pools of a river, fish never rise well at the fly, although the part of the loch and the pool of the river may look very tempting to the angler.

White trout and salmon creep down nearer the outlet of a loch as autumn advances, preparatory to choosing their spawning-beds. The top of a small loch is therefore best early in the year, the lower parts gradually improving as the season draws on.

If, however, the feeders of a loch are large enough for fish to ascend, their first object is to seek these, and press up them. In the smaller lochs the feeding burns may admit sea-trout *during floods*, but are seldom large enough for salmon; the consequence is, that all the heavy fish remain in the loch till harvest, and are very apt to haunt the mouths of brooks during a spate. This is the case even in Loch Lomond, where, with the exception of the outlet (the Leven), there is no stream where salmon dare enter, except at the spawning-time; and it is amazing to see great fish at that season in mountain brooks that will scarce cover, far less conceal them.

In Loch Awe, where the fine feeder Orchy is ready to receive them, salmon seldom go up the loch at all. When clear of the river Awe (the outlet of the loch), they immediately press on to the Orchy, and enter it. Consequently, salmon are scarcely ever taken in the loch, except between the mouths of these rivers.

When salmon know they have the safety of a loch to look to as the reward of their efforts for fresh water, the struggle they hazard to gain their object is almost incredible. I have watched a shoal boring up the Knock for Loch Baa when they had to turn on their sides to force themselves through the shallows, and the noise caused by these exertions could be heard at a considerable distance. At first I fancied some creature was fording the stream, and, on walking up

saw monsters of from 10 to 25 lb. fighting against water often only a few inches deep.

I have always been convinced that trolling is ruination to fly-fishing in small salmon lochs. All the shores, banks, and rocks have their feeding or resting fish driven into deep water, scared not only by the boat, but even by the long trolling-lines sweeping over.

Fly-practice in lochs from a boat is far less startling to fish; and the more complete the angler's knowledge of every sunk bank, rock, or shallow point, the less likely will he be to frighten them away. In order to obtain this angling geography, the loch should be surveyed in dry weather; and when the different feeding-grounds are discovered, they should be noted by marks from different positions opposite to or crossing each other. A decayed stump of a tree exactly opposite a shepherd's hut, making a triangle with a rock or the end of a point, may be the only available beacons to guide you to a first-rate *mid-loch* cast. For two years I had the right to one side of Loch Baa, and by these simple means, before the first season was half over, knew all the established casts fully as well as the fishing guides, and found out some more they had no idea of.

Perfect confidence in this local knowledge is the foundation of success in lochs; and when the fisher fully possesses it, *and not till then,* will he perceive

how many blunders he can prevent his boatman from committing. For instance, effectually to fish the feeding-grounds with the least risk of scaring them, it is absolutely necessary to know the exact spots where the salmon lie. When the feeding-ground has a sheer descent from shallow to deep water, this may be shrewdly guessed; but when the deep is reached gradually, a rise in the loch, or even a change of wind, may alter the seats of salmon a considerable way either side. As the angler's object is to keep his boat out of sight in deep water, and pitch his fly over the fish, when the water deepens suddenly from the bank or rock, he has simply to fish round them with a line longer or shorter, according to the state of the atmosphere or the power of the breeze. The salmon will all be found on or near the brow, and in a dark or windy day they do not see the boat until close on them. I have seen the heaviest fish rise and hook in such weather within a few yards of the boat—a rare chance for men who throw an indifferent line.

But should the day be clear, with only a light breeze, especially when casting over *shallow points and places where the water deepens by inches*, none but an accomplished master of the salmon-rod need hope for much success. Such ground must be approached with the greatest caution, or you may dash in among the shoal unawares. It is always best to err on the safe side, and begin to throw before you expect a rise,

drawing in to the point where you think salmon really are by slow degrees.

Should the morning be favourable for fly, a little attention to the rising of the fish will save both time and trouble; but when the weather is not so propitious, and, in consequence, few rises to be seen, care and caution, far from wasting the day, are the chief means of insuring success at its close.

There was a long promontory half-way down Loch Baa, called the "Salmon Point," from being their grand rendezvous. The area of the feeding-ground extended to nearly 200 yards; and when they were rising briskly, we could fish it over in half the time required if they were dull and sulky. This cape was one of the favoured haunts where fish were sure to harbour all summer; and even on the days when none were seen feeding on the natural fly, you might depend on their resting below—hence the need of always going carefully over it. On two occasions, when wind and sky were all that could be wished, I had carefully gone over the Salmon Point without a rise, or even seeing a fish stir at the natural fly. The first time, when changing my cast for a fresh trial, the head of an otter above the best part of the water showed that my trouble would be useless. On the next unsuccessful day we were resting on the shore after sweeping the water thoroughly; the otter's head again appeared, when he dived all round the fishing-ground, and finally landed, and ran into

the wood. Other casts of this loch were more uncertain, the salmon and white trout often changing their ground. Here I may mention a rather unaccountable fact long noted by me—viz., that a cast of a loch or a pool in a river will sometimes prove excellent for a whole season, and during the next scarcely afford a rise, yet no outward alteration can be detected either in the loch cast or river pool.

The size and colour of salmon-flies do not vary nearly so much in lochs as in rivers. One reason no doubt is, that there are fewer changes in a loch; another, that the loch season is generally shorter. I have often found red palmers, or a red body with "blae" wing, very acceptable to salmon in small lochs; in large lochs a green body and darker wing is a killing fly; but every tolerable fisherman ought to be able to find out *the* fly of the water he frequents; and if a stranger, he must trust a good deal to his fishing guide. There is often a loch-fly, which, take the season from end to end, you kill most heavy fish with; and yet there are many whole days in the same year when that fly will be rejected for another very unlike it. Neither is it a necessary consequence that the most killing fly of one year should be also the most successful of the next. On the contrary, I have experienced a complete change in the favoured fly of the season, not only in lochs, but in rivers.

The most deadly fly of the river Falloch altered every season of the three years I rented it; and al-

though a large minnow was eagerly dashed at, both by white trout and heavy loch ones which ascended from Loch Lomond, yet I invariably fixed all the largest sea-trout with fly and the lightest tackle I dared risk. A grilse-rod and the finest gut made a Falloch trout of from 4 to 7 lb. a good substitute for a 15 or 20 lb. salmon with ordinary tackle. The best Falloch run I had was with a 4½-pounder hooked by the belly-fin. I had *almost* to swim before landing him.[1]

The heaviest Falloch sea-trout taken by me were from 5 to upwards of 7 lb.; but I have frequently captured them in Loch Baa from 9 to 12 lb. Like salmon, none of these Loch Baa monsters ever ascended the feeding burns, although in autumn one stream near the top of the loch was full of sea-trout from 1 to 3 lb. weight. My son, then a lad, used to row over to this mountain brook, and seldom returned without several of those white trout, besides a large basket of yellow. His last take was five sea-trout from 1½ to 3 lb., and seven dozen burn ones. He always fished with worm, and chose a day when the burn was quite dwindled. In such small water as this there was no need of a reel, but the gut required to be nearly as fine as horse-hair. As in burn-trout bait-fishing, he always threw up-stream, seldom, however, moving a sea-trout where the burn ones bit

[1] In the autumn of 1863, my last season on the Falloch, I landed twenty trout of an aggregate weight of 60 lb.

freely. These pigmies are obliged to keep their distance from the leviathans that invade them in autumn. Each sea-trout then chooses a pool, and preys easily and greedily in such clear confined water on the burn-trout fry, driving away those too large for food, in order to prevent them from sharing in the worms, slugs, &c., carried down the current. The little burn-trout are therefore compelled by fear, and the bigger ones by force, to desert the quarters of a dangerous and selfish usurper.

In loch-fishing, I have constantly observed that too much wind spoils sport more than too little, always excepting a dead calm. Salmon and white trout, however, will bear a stiffer gale than the yellow, at least if your boatman is expert at the oars, and perfectly knows the fishing-ground. If not, never take him out in a rough day, when you will find it impossible to make him obey your directions. A really efficient boatman is about as great a comfort as a thoroughly-trained retriever, and both contribute in no slight degree to the day's success. You may very soon teach for a fishing boatman an active and intelligent lad, but his first lessons should always be *learned in a calm.*

TROLLING FOR THE SALMO-FEROX.

"IT'S A FAR CRY TO LOCH OWE!"

TROLLING for giant trout is the very acme of rod-fishing. It is generally thought that the whole of this exciting sport consists in fixing good baits upon the trolling-rod, letting out a sufficiency of line, and mainly relying upon the boatman's skill to point out the best fishing-ground. Although trolling after this fashion may occasionally be successful, yet the reverse is far oftener experienced, when all the blame is sure to be laid on the weather, as the best ground has been carefully searched, and the baits were excellent. Few gentlemen are aware how easily this best ground may be changed to a good distance on either side, by a bright sun, a breeze of wind, or a rise of the loch after rain. This is invariably the case where the shores are level, and the depth consequently gradual. Should the sky be dark and the loch discoloured, or, on the

contrary, small and clear, with a cloudless sky, a difference in the size and colour of the bait, and rapidity in spinning it, may bring home an empty boat, or reward us with a couple of trout that will give the boatman as much trouble to carry as two buckets of water.

There are three kinds of trout that peculiarly belong to this description of fishing. And, first, the great salmo-ferox, from its size, strength, and cunning, deserves the highest place. Next, the gillaroo (pronounced "ghirroo" by the Highlanders), which, although not nearly so shy, nor of such giant proportions as the other, yet has been frequently taken from sixteen to eighteen pounds. (I have never fished much for them myself, and the largest I have caught was five pounds weight. I hooked him with minnow near the foot of Loch Lubnaig, as I rowed home after fly-fishing the green sunk banks at the top. He was in excellent condition, but in fight and appearance strongly reminded me of a barbel.) And, lastly, the famous trout of the Thames. It seldom attains the dimensions even of our gillaroo; but it merits a place among the triumvirate, both from its beauty and the skill required to hook it.

In trolling for any of these fish, especially for the salmo-ferox, great attention should be paid to the tackle, not only that it is all of the very best quality, but also that it is dressed in the manner least apt to miss the trout. Of course the angler must not expect

many runs in a day, which makes it particularly vexatious when the fish that *do* dash at the bait escape the hooks. In boat-trolling for smaller trout, I often use but two hooks—a large one through the tail of the bait, and a lesser through its mouth. This has many advantages: you bait quickly and easily, the appearance of the minnow is not spoiled, and when the trout are at all greedy, they don't often miss. There is this to be said against it, however, that when shy fish bite warily, they may sometimes seize the bait by the middle, and, for want of middle hooks, blow it away again, when slightly pricked by the others. The spinning also is neither so quick nor so true as by the following method, which I have tried with great success. It is, first a single hook, next three tied back to back, then another single one tied the reverse way, ending with a second trio. Of course, when trolling for the feroxes, all the hooks must be very large. This latter plan, when properly baited, moves very naturally; and although there are so many hooks, I am convinced, *from the rapidity of the spinning*, they are even less perceptible than when there are few. One of the last hooks being inserted *at the side* of the bait's tail, the whole tail-fin catches the water better than by the other more simple method; and there are three hooks for the shoulder and three for the tail, the two places where the feroxes are most apt to strike. I am quite sure, after trying both ways, that this last plan not only misses fewer

trout, but secures a greater number of runs. I should therefore strongly recommend it when large shy fish are the object, although not where trout are small and plentiful, especially in cold weather, when the difficulty of baiting is a serious objection.

When fairly afloat, beware of trusting too implicitly to your boatman, even should you be totally unacquainted with the loch. It commonly happens, unless he is a good practical fisher, that he will take you over the same ground under all circumstances; and should no fish run, lay the blame on something unpropitious in the day, which it may require some ingenuity on his part to discover, and some credulity on yours to believe. Your best plan with such a guide is to make him be most particular about the surest resorts of the large fish; and should you be unsuccessful the first time of going over them, try again a little nearer the shore, if there is much wind; or, if it be calm, a little further out, *especially when the loch is small.* Towards dusk you may generally keep nearer the shore, also when the loch has risen, or is discoloured with rain. You must not then sink the baits so deep, but raise them by taking off some of the sinking-lead—not by winding up a part of the line, as the shallower you troll the more need of a long line. It is always a good plan to have baits of different sizes; the larger upon the outside rod, which should have the longest line and heaviest lead. This rod should be fixed by the butt, at the opposite

side of the boat, so as to cross before you. I need not say the reel and line must be quite free. Keep the other rod in hand, now and then sinking the point in the water as it grows deeper or the day calmer. Should the rod across the boat hook a fish, instantly throw the other to the boatman next you, who may wind it up out of your way, his comrade guiding the boat with both oars. If the fish is large, he will most likely strike away from the boat, and your first effort should be to shorten your line by backing water. Whenever the fish is under command of a short line, and you can persuade him to follow the boat, land and kill him from shore.

While sitting in the stern, be always on the look-out for weeds, and give the alarm. Your boatmen will immediately turn rapidly into the deep; and you, raising a rod in each hand, as high as possible, should make every effort to keep the baits near the surface. If this is done cleverly, it may prevent that major misery of boat-trolling, *a double fast.* If fortunate enough to get clear, it may be as well to examine the baits; indeed this should be done at intervals throughout the day, as a small green weed attached to the bait will prevent it from spinning, or, at all events, act as a damper to the trout. Fish always for such shy customers with a very long line, especially if there is little wind to curl the water. Where the shores are level, the depth is generally gradual; therefore try the good places at various depths, as your own judg-

ment may suggest. But should the rock or mountain rise abruptly from the margin, the water almost always deepens suddenly within a short distance of the shore. Once going over is quite enough if you keep between the shallow and the deep, which only occupies a few yards. When sky and water are dull, a large bright bait, such as a salmon-smelt, is very good; but if the loch is clear and low, bait one rod with a parr instead of a burn-trout, the ordinary bait.

Never find fault with your boatmen, when the hooks stick fast, for taking you into too shallow water. If you do, they will most likely prevent this annoyance, by keeping too deep for any fish to see your bait. Most fishing-guides are too apt, at any rate, to err this way, to save themselves trouble; as they dread a fast even more than the angler. The truth is, when trolling for the salmo-ferox, the baits should be hung only a few yards from the bottom. They must therefore frequently catch a weed, or root, or sunk rock. Be assured that the largest fish are generally taken by trolling close to the bottom, as they are lazy. In roughish weather row slowly, in order to give them a good opportunity of seeing and seizing the bait; quicker in a mild clear day, for it is then as well to give them little time to reflect. East and north are the worst winds for Loch Awe; west, south-west, and even north-west are very favourable. By adhering to these rules, a fair troller ought to take one or two large feroxes every good day.

In the year 1842 I had five days' trolling on Loch Awe, and as I noted down each day's success, I shall here record it.

Headquarters, Cladich, April 30th.—Did not go out till five o'clock; a fine evening, but too calm. Trolled down three miles on the Cladich side of the loch, returned over the same ground, a little nearer shore; not a tug until dusk, when we were within half a mile of the inn. I then hooked a fish: he was a dull wretch, and made indifferent play. Weight, eight pounds. When brought to table he cut up white, but was firm and good to eat. I have observed two kinds of the salmo-ferox—one dark-skinned and white in the flesh, the other pink in flesh, and of starry scales. The latter always makes the most spirited resistance. Perhaps it may be inferred that there is only one kind, and that the difference arises from their condition. This is not the case, however, as I have taken white-fleshed specimens in the finest possible order.

May 2d.—Started at seven for Castle Connal, about midway between Cladich and the ford at the foot of the loch. Castle Connal bay a great resort for the heavy fish. Killed a brace, one six pounds, the other two and a half. Trolled till six o'clock.

May 3d.—A close sultry wind; did not go to fish till after dinner, when it got brisker. Tried the islands and head of the loch; hooked a fine fish off Enish Isle; he made capital play for half an hour,

when I stranded him upon the island. Weight, nine and a half pounds, in first-rate condition, and a beautiful fish. Had a look at the island, and a description of it from old Sandy. It is a fine green sheep-pasture, and often called the green isle, as well as Enish Isle, or Ellen's Island. Ellen was a daughter of Sir James M'Naughton, and was the first person buried in the island. She was drowned in the loch. The poor chief of Lochiel, who was stabbed with the penknife in Castle Connal, was also buried here. After having satisfied my craving for traditions, true or false, we re-entered the boat, and coasted Fruich-land, or the Heather Island. The Castle of Fruich-land is a picturesque ruin. Sir James M'Naughton was once governor of it, and, when Ben Cruachan was a deer-forest, Alexander the Third sojourned in the castle to enjoy forest sport. Its shore, however, afforded none to me. We now coasted the mainland to the head of the loch, where I hooked a small fellow, only one pound and three quarters—came round the opposite side, and entered the estuary of the Awe, a fine black deep creek, but I never hooked a large fish in it. To-day we only got a small thing, rather more than a pound. To make up, Sandy was profuse in story. Pointing to the dark threatening mountain, with the white streak of the winter drift upon its summit, "It was on the side o' Ben Cruachan here, that the Irish chief, M'Faydon, was beat by Sir William Wallace, and chased into a cave yonder"

(showing a crag opposite). "Sir William fand him oot, however, an' stuck his head on a spear on the tap o' the craig, by order o' Sir Neil Campbell, Black Knight o' Loch Owe."

I was pondering over the rock, where the Irish chief's knowledge-box had, no doubt, afforded a resting-place for the sage owls of the neighbouring dells, when Sandy again called my attention to a brook, fringed with oak copse, which trickled over the heathery brow of Ben Cruachan. From his solemn air I expected an improvement on the Black Knight's cruelty to poor M'Faydon. "Yon's an awfu' place for wild-cats. I heard them answering ither wi' sic screighs, ae nicht whan I passed late, I thocht I wad hae been frichtened oot o' ma joodgment." "And what did you do, Sandy?" "I jist falded ma arms across ma throat, an' ran past the burn as hard as I could split. Catch me gang past that place again after the gloamin'!"

There is something very imposing in this outlet of the Awe: the rocks on each side so rugged and steep; the narrow deep water so dark from their shadow. If you drop a pebble into it, the sound is so vivid and hollow, you shudder at the distance it must sink before finding its bed. I rather think the sudden and great depth of the water is one reason why so few fish frequent this creek. We now emerged from the bay, and coasted the stony cheerful shore of New Inverawe. When skirting this shallow, and gliding

slowly past the little isles which lie beyond, Sandy is always in expectation "o' a rug." He was not gratified by one to-day.

May 4th.—Up at four o'clock, intending to troll down to the ford at the foot of the loch, a distance of nineteen miles. It was a dead calm when we rowed off, but, from certain appearances in the sky the evening before, we were pretty sure of at least as much wind as we wanted before breakfast-time. So it proved. By ten o'clock we had a south-wester which effectually barred our progress farther down than Castle Connal. Put about, and drifted back with the wind, trolling the best bays and shores on each side of the loch. Hooked a very fine trout off a rocky point five miles below Port Sonachan. It was tenderly hooked, and slipped off, to our chagrin. Crossed to the Sonachan side, and hooked another with a salmon-smelt. Landed him, after a tough struggle of three-quarters of an hour, on Bala-Menach shore; ten pounds, and in the finest condition. No more runs till we passed Cladich burn, and began to pull along the inhabited island. I then hooked a fish which soon came to the top of the water, and I saw he was a pike. Sandy assured me it was "ane o' thae *new* beasts that cam' doon the Orchy frae Loch Tulla, that my Lord Breadalbane pat in." We made small bones of him, as he was only four pounds weight. Got two more trout, rather above a pound, on our way home.

May 5th.—I had now only one more day to spare, and was disappointed at being unable to devote it to the west end of the loch, at "the foord," decidedly the best trolling-ground for the large fish. It was a squally, showery morning, so I waited to see if the afternoon would clear up. There was no change, but as the wind was westerly I ordered out the boat about four o'clock. Trolled down three miles, when I had "a rug." Landed the trout in a few minutes —only two pounds. Crossed over and searched the Inistrinich shore on our return. Unsuccessful, till we reached a very weedy creek nearly opposite Cladich, which Sandy was anxious to avoid. But to me it looked so tempting that I made him turn in, although he cast many a rueful look at his great enemies, the weeds. About half-way down the little bay, a strong lively fish seized the bait; we got clear of the confined water with some difficulty, landed, and played him from shore. Although he only weighed six pounds, I have seldom taken out a more high-mettled trout. The evening was bitterly cold, so we did not bait again, but pulled straight for the harbour of Cladich, and next day drove over the hill to Inverary for a short sojourn there. Caution:—Always weigh the large fish yourself, or see them weighed, when at a fishing inn, otherwise they will probably weigh two pounds heavier down-stairs than up.

When the loch has been thoroughly flooded, you must wait till it falls in considerably, as the large fish

especially are glutted with food, and lazy, after continued wet weather. Upon the water diminishing, they soon become more alert than before the rain.

The best time of year for the salmo-ferox is the end of April, May, and the beginning of June. They are very dormant all July and August, particularly if the weather be hot. Although much more shy than in spring, they sometimes take pretty fair in September. A small bait is generally most successful in this month. The large ones lie farther from the shore than earlier in the season. Many of the best worth hooking even haunt the middle of the loch at this time of year. I killed two last September (1850) *in mid-loch*, which weighed twelve and a half and twelve pounds. Some of the Loch Awe fishing-guides suggested to me, that the partiality of the feroxes for deep water then might be occasioned by the pike driving the small trout from the shallows, and that the feroxes followed the shoals into the deep to prey upon them. But if this is the reason, why don't they do so in May and June? In autumn a good fish is sometimes taken in the estuary of the Awe, called the "Brander," as they are making for the river to spawn. The Brander is generally blank at any other time.

The salmo-feroxes are, as a rule, much smaller in the northern lochs than in those of the Western Highlands. Trolling for five days in Loch Layghal, in Sutherland, our total was nine fish. The largest

fourteen pounds, a very unusual size there, but an ugly fish. The next, eleven pounds, a great beauty, which we had preserved. Then an eight-pounder, and several from four to seven pounds. Loch Assynt contains the largest feroxes in the county, but we had only time to troll it one forenoon, and brought in a twelve-pound fish, and another of five. Of the many lochs I have trolled, I never found one with so clear a channel as Assynt.

The larger feroxes never run with a very full loch. You may possibly hook a small one, but the only fish worth the trouble of trying for will not dash at your spinning bait till the water clears and falls in a good deal. Small feroxes frequently take a fly, but I never knew save one large one do so, and that was actually in the river Awe, where most likely it had gone for spawning. It weighed seventeen pounds, and was preserved as a curiosity.

Those who prefer the phantom minnow or parr to natural bait, will find the brown phantom best for Loch Layghal, though, for Loch Shin, the green is most deadly. For my own part, I prefer the natural bait to either. A phantom enthusiast assured me that in his hand the apparition had quite beat the natural bait, until he fastened false gills to the latter, when they were about equal. This showed pretty well that the real bait had no fair play until the gills were stuck on. Of course, if any one is not fisherman enough to make the natural bait spin true without

gills, the phantom must then beat it. We had plenty phantom parrs, but when the time of trial came, both of us declined the honour of precedence, as each was persuaded that the substance was better than the shadow.

The vast number of huge salmon that have been captured last spring (1877) in Loch Tay with the phantom parr, has been unrivalled in the annals of Scotch fishing sport. The crests, however, of the successful fishermen are considerably lowered by the well-known fact, that comparatively little skill is necessary to enable any average angler to share to the full in these piscatorial triumphs. He has only to go down to the loch armed with three-ply casting-lines, tested reel-lines 120 yards long, a good assortment of phantom parrs, and very strong trolling-rods. All the Loch Tay boatmen are quite equal to their department, and will do him every justice—and more! They select his phantoms, warn him how much pirn-line to let out behind the coble, and the depth to which each phantom ought to be sunk. Lastly, they will take him over all the likely water—the best of it over and over again. When a fish strikes, they watch the bend of the rod and humour every dodge of the struggling monster. If it rushes away they will follow it; if it sneaks towards the boat, they will foil the ruse by a ready movement in the opposite direction; and so dexterously is all effected, that however slovenly the fisherman may be in handling his reel, the bend of the rod is seldom re-

laxed,—for well do these trained boatmen know, that although the rod *may* break in clumsy hands, yet the fish's hold, from the excellent arrangement of the hooks, is not likely to do so; as for the tackle, it would hold—a bull!

Next in importance for heavy fish to the March trolling of Loch Tay, is the November boat-angling of the Tweed. There is this difference, however, that it requires a moderately good fisherman to be successful here. The boatmen are at least as expert as their brethren of Loch Tay, and do the angler equal justice. The practice differs considerably from that of most other rivers, especially those where you fish from the banks. After delivering your cast, you must not raise the point of the rod an inch, but bring the fly slowly round to the stern of the coble, the rod all the time being perfectly horizontal. The object of this is to sink the fly, which the fish, of course, suck under water, nothing but the "bell-up" appearing on the surface. Should an angler raise his rod ever so little, he is instantly warned by the man at the oar, "If ye do that, sir, ye'll no' hook a fish."

By the kind permission of the noble proprietor, my two eldest sons had a couple of days on the Floors water, landing twenty-eight salmon between them. Four of these were thirty pounds weight, and the smallest was one under twenty pounds. They were both satisfied, for one had the advantage in weight, the other in numbers.

Double-hooked, gaudy, and *very expensive* flies are the present favourites on Tweedside both in spring and autumn—a complete contrast to my early fishing days of that stately river. A list of a few of the most deadly flies now used is subjoined:—Jock Scott, Silver Doctor, Sudden Death, Parson, Durham Stranger, Fraser, Barker Duncan, The Captain.

Hearing that many of the largest fish often lingered in the lower reaches of the Tweed, I went last November (1876) to Norham, but the practice on that part of the river would not invite a second visit. After putting up my rod, I was given a lump of lead, and desired to fasten it a yard above the fly—the fishing-guide assuring me I should have no chance otherwise. The fly must be sunk near mid-water, he said, thus degrading it into a minnow. The lead most effectually hindered all good casting (which, I was told, was unnecessary); so after fishing from 11 till 2, I was heartily sick of it, and did not scruple to say so. "Weel, sir, there has scarcely a fish ta'en the flee for the last week; but wadna ye try the minnow?" "That is illegal," quoth I. "Ou, never mind that; they a' dae sae here." After a pause, "Nae fish hae been landed withoot it lately." I declined for myself, but had some curiosity to watch him. Whipping out of his pocket a small bottle of live minnows, he carefully baited a tackle, and with heavy lead sunk it to within an inch or two of the bottom, thus degrading the minnow in *its* turn into a worm. He fished with

a very short line, and trailed his bait by irregular jerks backwards and forwards. After fishing for some time without an offer, his comrade, who had stationed himself on a good look-out, called down, "Jamie, there's somebody coming." In a trice the minnow was exchanged for fly; but when the "somebody" came near enough, he again shouted, "Ou, it's naebody," when the minnow was again donned with equal celerity. On asking what was the matter, he replied, "I mistook him for the water-bylie."

TROLLING AND TROUTING RULES.

As I have already stated, the largest salmo-feroxes never run when a loch is full or discoloured, although the smaller ones may. Fly-trout also often rise well in a flooded loch, if the sky is good and the wind fair. Small feroxes of five or six pounds frequently take the fly at such times. East wind is always bad, even should the sun be powerful. When you are trolling with a north wind, or a still more unfortunate easterly breeze, pay most attention to those parts where hills and gullies make the wind strike as if from south or west. For years I imagined this could make no difference. Practice at length convinced me to the contrary; for when the wind was in such unpropitious quarters, if I hooked a fine fish, it was almost always by the help of those fictitious gales. I am well aware

many will doubt and laugh. I don't pretend to account *for* it, but have often found my account in attending *to* it. When the wind scours the loch in frequent gusts, and as suddenly dies away into a calm, the troller has a great advantage who knows all the straths and hollows where it comes down and first strikes any good water.

In the early part of the season the points keep most fish. As the year advances, the bays are the surest find. In autumn a heavy fish is often hooked about the mouths or estuaries of rivers and burns, which, earlier in the season, would have been trolled in vain. Of course, the fish is making for the running water to spawn. The Brander, at the head of the river Awe, seldom harbours a good salmo-ferox except at such times. When one of these fish strikes, hooks, and drops off, instantly let out some line with your hand from the reel, and he will sometimes follow and fasten firmly. This I have frequently proved.

In the smaller lochs the country people will often warn you that "the big fish don't begin to take" till a certain hour, and leave off at another. Pay attention to the stated times, but never grudge to begin your trolling earlier in the morning than they advise, and prolong it as late in the evening as you please. We were assured that there was little chance of a salmo-ferox in Loch Layghal after three o'clock. Most of those we hooked took greedily at least two hours later.

In fine calm summer nights, fish feed so well as to be rather lazy next day. This applies to fly-trout in particular. A rough night, succeeded by a calmer day, has of course the contrary effect, so the trouter should take advantage of it. In still sunny weather the salmo-ferox feeds nearer the top. Troll then with a finer wheel-line (if you have it), a much lighter casting-line, no lead, and smaller swivels. Often the best fish are taken in that sort of weather. By adopting this plan the first day I was out on Loch Awe one season, I slew a fifteen-pound fish, and another of six pounds, with only a light breath of air. As a *general* rule, however, the nearer the bottom you troll for large fish the better.

In the smaller, shallower lochs, the feroxes are often collected in shoals. Should you hook or kill one, try them again over the same place until they stop running. In minnow-trolling for yellow trout, you may often have great success by attending to this rule. But when you happen upon a shoal of sea-trout, salmon, or grilse in a loch, be especially particular to come over them again and again, whether you are fishing with the troll or the fly. In *very shallow* lochs the fly-trout are often afraid to come within reach of the shores till evening. To know this, may often fill a creel that would otherwise come back empty.

Always, if possible, dry trolling-lines by pulling them out along the shores when you have done fish-

ing. If dried in a room, they twist, and give far more trouble. If not pulled out to dry every time after use, they soon rot.

Neither rules nor practice will make a man an angler, unless he has a turn for it, although love of scenery or love of "Father Izaak" sometimes induces him to try. Such enthusiasts deserve better sport than they often obtain. A drunken fishing-guide of Loch Awe was piloting one of them, when he accidentally fixed a heavy fish. "He's running away with my line, I tell you." "Give him a turn round the thowel-pin," suggests little Joe. "He pulls it out still," complains the rod-handler. "Then give him two," says Joe, with all the authority of experience. Of course the *two* broke the fish. Another was quite content if allowed to pitch his fly among the prisoners of the draught-net, arguing that, as the fish were there, and must of course see the fly, it was *their* fault, and not *his*, if they refused it. A "wit" residing on Loch Lomond, unlike these devotees (whose pardon I beg if implying they were no wits), at once detected his lack of gift for the rod, and was candid enough to give me solid reasons why his first day's fishing was also his *last*. "In those days white trout were very plentiful in the loch, and by mere chance, the first day I ever tried, I had the misfortune to hook a large one. Having no boatman, I pulled after it right across to the opposite shore. Upon taking up my rod when the fish seemed *quieter*, it gave a tug and

broke my line. I then took out my watch to see how long this fool's chase had lasted, when the coble gave a lurch, and my valuable gold watch and bunch of seals toppled over the side, and most likely found a fob in the soft mud at the bottom of the water. Can you wonder, then, that I shirk a rod as if it were a serpent, or that I decline another introduction to a sea-trout until all the spirit has been boiled out of him?"

Sometimes, spite of all odds, the bungler gains the day. One of the most accomplished fishers I ever knew moved a salmon three times in the first pool he tried. As it showed signs of laziness, instead of "waiting on," he judged it best to give an hour's "law." Looking over his shoulder when preparing for the next pool, he saw the village tailor, who had scarcely ever thrown a line in his life, with his fish firm and fast, having fixed it at the first rise. He was standing aghast and helpless before the mighty spirit he had raised, and had no power to control. My friend had the good-nature to run back and save the fish, but he always described the contest between Snip and the salmon as the most aggravating sight that had ever stirred his spleen. In the summer of 1855, a tempting trout haunted a weir upon the river Kennet, in Berkshire. It set at nought all the best anglers of the district, until the miller, seeing it gulp down a piece of potato, took the hint, and immediately hooked

it. This fish weighed ten pounds, and its Irish taste gave rise to much speculation.

These great loch-trout are becoming more shy every year. Last season my sons and I tried them with three-ply, and even single gut, as they seemed scared by gimp. It is certain that they came at the bait less cautiously, and seized it with greater avidity, than when the casting-line was gimp. Out of seven, which we landed in four days, only one was fixed by gimp tackle; and strange to say, it was the only ferox which took the phantom parr, but it was hooked foul. All our other fish ran either at a natural parr or at a small burn-trout, the parr being the favourite. There was generally a phantom on one of the rods, oftenest of moderate, but now and then of large size.

RIVER-TROUTING.

My first advice to the beginner in river-fishing is to give himself little trouble about the old-fashioned descriptions and arrangement of flies, such as good old Izaak (unequalled as a writer) has so elaborately, and, I must say, so unnecessarily discussed. The *theory* of fly-fishing has been much simplified since his day, and a few directions as to its *practice* are all I think necessary to give. For the sake of illustration, I will take the Almond and the Water of Leith near Coltbridge, two streams well known to all Edinburgh anglers, and which also bear a strong resemblance to many of the English rivers. The trout in both these waters, especially the latter, *were*, for I am sorry I cannot say *are*, shy, well fed, and lazy; and here, if anywhere, one would imagine that the whole absurd catalogue of artificial flies would be needed to tempt their dainty appetites. So far, however, from this being the case,

I have never used more than three or four different kinds during the whole spring and summer, and was generally at least as successful as any of my numerous competitors. These flies were the same as those I have mentioned under loch-fishing, only of course suiting the size of the hook to the nature and quality of the stream, according as it is much whipped over, &c. If the angler pleases, he may vary the mouse-body to the water-rat, which will make it a little darker for a bright day; and a bunting's is the best blae-wing he can use. When the water is very small I have occasionally omitted the mallard and teal wings, for the sake of lightness, and fished with the flies as palmers. At Coltbridge especially, the trout, from being constantly harassed with anglers, require very fine fishing. I have taken most of the fat heavy ones either with the mouse-body and snipe or bunting wing, or a small black palmer, hook a No. 0 or No. 1 at the largest. If the water should be rather swollen and discoloured, always use the mallard-wing and red hackle for the trail, and it is a good plan to clip off a piece of the shank of the hook before tying the fly. You may thus fish with a No. 2 as lightly as a 1, which is a great point in all still waters where the trout are shy.

To fish these deeps with success, the angler must not only be able to throw a long line most delicately, but also attain the art of making his fly alight within an inch of any given point, in order to take advantage of the rises of the trout. When the fly is dropped in

the *centre of the ring, the instant after the trout has belled up*, it is ten times more likely to rise again than if the fly touched the water at ever so short a distance, even if thrown as lightly as possible and clearly seen by the fish. There is more art in this than most anglers are aware of. In dragging the cast, the gut should not cause the *slightest ripple;* to prevent which the flies must be sunk a little, and the motion be slow. It is also very desirable to attain the knack of throwing well when trees are close behind you; as trout, especially in summer, are apt to harbour under them for the sake of the insects that are blown off into the water beneath.

There is often in summer a small black fly that keeps playing on the top of the water, and every now and then alighting for a moment, as if tempting its aquatic foe. When the angler sees this fly thus sporting with the jaws of death, let him always have a small black hackle on his cast. There is also another summer-fly which comes down upon the river in great numbers,—they keep all together, and hover about two or three inches above the surface. The trout follow them in shoals, and in the Almond I have seen half-a-dozen heads at a time darting up at the busy throng above. As these flies do not alight on the water even for an instant, the trout are all intent on seizing them *in the air;* and there being generally a dead calm where these insects congregate, your cast, though thrown ever so lightly, has more

the effect of alarming than of enticing the fish. It is most tantalising; but all that can be done is to take a few light casts now and then, *stopping whenever the trout cease to rise.* By this cautious proceeding, you may take one or two of the most greedy. When I have caught trout at such times, I have observed that they as often as not took the fly on the cast least resembling the insect.

It would be treason to doubt the omnipotence of the May-fly, whose reign, however, seldom begins in Scotland till June. The more ignorant the angler, the more determined will he be to have the imitation on his cast when the natural fly is on the water. Well, let him—it will kill; but whether better, either in May or June, than those I have named, let the man who can deftly throw them judge for himself. I was at one time as great a stickler for the May-fly as any one, but for the last few years have had none upon my cast, and never missed his company. I don't profess to be a theorist in my fishing, but have come to the conclusion that a few judicious shades from light to dark are quite sufficient when fishing with *small flies* for yellow trout, whether or not they take them for a known insect; and the least observant man, by having four of the flies I have mentioned on his cast, will soon find out whether light, dark, or medium is the order of the day.

When river-fishing, I never trouble myself with more tackle than three or four casts round my hat,

each having a different trail—thus being able to fish with the fly *as trail*, which seems for the time the favourite. If unacquainted with the stream, it may be as well to have a few additional casts, with the hooks of different sizes.

In some very muddy waters, such as the Ale in Selkirkshire (exactly the colour of its name), a single thread of silver is recommended when fishing with a dark fly. I tried this, but found a red palmer quite as effective. No doubt, however, the tinsel is good in such a case, though I have seldom seen a river discoloured enough to require it.

Another hint to the young angler is to mind what he is about when he approaches the still deeps of the river. Many are apt to pass them by altogether, and scarcely try a cast until they come to the pools and streams again. Perhaps the best test of a finished performer is the manner in which he fishes these dead, deep places, especially if there is little wind, for they generally harbour the largest and best-fed fish, which are, of course, the most suspicious and difficult to rise. We will suppose a first-rate angler approaching one of these unrippled deeps: his tackle is of the very lightest description; he is watching with a hawk's eye for the rising of a trout. Should he see one, he instantly moves up till within rather a distant cast of the place, taking advantage of any bush or tuft of reeds which may the better conceal him; or, if necessary, going down on his knee, ready to

drop his cast, light as gossamer, right across the next circle which the crafty fish may make by sucking down another incautious fly. If the trout should rise, he is not unlikely to be one well worth hooking, and to give good sport in such quiet water. When there is breeze enough to make much ripple, it may prevent any but a quick and practised eye from seeing the rises *most worth notice;* in which case the water should be fished with as long a line and as light casts as possible. You need not despair should trees or any other obstacle prevent your sweep from being so free as otherwise it ought, for if you are suitably dressed,[1] and make no rapid motions, you will be so masked by the trees or bushes as to allow of a much nearer approach and shorter cast. In the Water of Leith there are two pools a little way above the bridge, overshadowed by old trees, and much frequented by large heavy trout. There I have been often more successful than when my sweep was perfectly unencumbered; and I must be allowed to mention a curious circumstance which happened to me some years ago in one of these said pools. Having tied a cast rather hurriedly in the morning, I hooked a good fish upon my bob, a mouse-body and snipe-wing, when the single knot slipped. Two days after, when fishing the same place, I again hooked and killed a fine trout, upwards of a pound weight,

[1] The slate-blue of the heron's back is the best colour for a fisher's dress.

and, to my astonishment, my own handiwork with two inches of gut was sticking in its lip. One of the fraternity, sedulously employed on the opposite bank, remarked, that "it must have been an honest trout, for it was not for want of temptation that he kept the hook for the right owner!" He also related a fact of the same kind which had happened a week or two before. A friend of his was fishing with minnow, when the tackle caught in a tree behind, and, not being able to reach it, he had broken the gut. Soon after, when some one was shaking the tree, to secure the tackle, it dropped off into the water, and, being slightly loaded with lead, immediately sank. Next day an eel was taken at a set-line with a piece of gut hanging out of its mouth, and the very person who had lost the tackle being on the spot, it occurred to him that it might be his, which proved to be the case.

The insensibility to pain, which an angler can scarcely fail to notice in these cold-blooded creatures, is a point which happily redeems from cruelty the necessary inflictions of his craft. I recollect catching three fine trout one evening when trolling on Loch Lomond with a friend, and we discovered hanging out of the mouth of one of them a strong hair-line. On opening the fish, we found a large bait-hook fixed firmly in its stomach, the wicker and part of the hook being nearly digested. The creature had evidently been caught and broke away from a set-line, and, though hooked in so vital a part, not only took our bait

greedily, and made a most capital fight for a quarter of an hour, but was in the very finest condition, having fattened on his hard fare, instead of wasting from torture.

The last hint I have to give on the still parts of the river is, that when the large trout refuse to rise, being sated with summer flies, a *small* minnow about dusk is most likely to succeed.

With regard to the streams, and more rapid parts of the river, it certainly requires practice to find out the feeding-places of trout. There is always a good cast just where the water begins to steady itself, after falling and foaming over a ledge of rock—also in the eddies caused by roots, stones, branches of trees, &c. An angler who loves his craft will very soon become knowing in this department, and will then find much less difficulty here than in the still deeps. Of course, the more rapid the water the less likely is the trout to observe either a fisher on the banks or his line, though perchance heavily thrown. But show me the man who can fish the *still* parts of the river with tact and science, and I will be answerable for the rest of his performance. As to wind, which most anglers make such a fuss about, although a moderate breeze is a *sine quâ non* in loch-fishing, and also an advantage to the clumsy craftsman on the river, yet if the water is in its best state, and the sun not very bright, a first-rate angler would rather have *too little* than *too much*.

The above observations apply equally to all the

rivers and streams I have fished; and my practice has been in many parts of England, as well as in the north, south, east, and west of Scotland.

LENNIE BURN.

How many recollections does the name of Lennie Burn arouse! None that have ever trod those pleasant paths, or threaded the devious track of that enchanting glen, will wonder that memory lingers there with fond delight. The ivied rocks, the fragrant woodbine, and countless varieties of wild flowers, combined with the rare exotics which the hand of art had scattered there, —above all, the symphony of the brook gurgling within its rocky bed, and ending with a fall, which, if not so wild as Bracklinn, surpasses it both in height and beauty. Many a sultry summer day have I wandered among these shady walks, listening to the sleepy burn, or watching the little trout suck down an occasional insect from among the myriads flickering about the surface. "The pool," a sort of reservoir and headquarters of the burn-trout, always particularly engaged my attention. I soon learned to distinguish every inmate, not only from its size and hue, but also its temper and disposition. Some were shy; others, greedy and tyrannical; and these several qualities were often exhibited so plainly, that we might learn a lesson even from a fish.

There was a small pond, formed by an old course of the burn, which, from time to time, was another source of speculation and amusement. It had a constant supply of fresh water from a spring, and although the inhabitants of this little basin were completely imprisoned, yet they were in no want of sustenance, from the bottom being soft and muddy, covered with leaves and decomposed vegetable matter. The place was surrounded by trees, which rained down abundance of flies, caterpillars, &c., for two or three trout, which, no one knows how, had found their way in.

During the latter end of autumn and the whole of winter, no sign of life was to be seen in this retired standing pool; but about the middle of February, if the weather was mild and the sun warm, a slight shaking noise let me know that the frogs had awaked from their winter sleep. By peeping cautiously over the bank, screening myself behind the trees, I discover one or two heads above the surface, which, sometimes singly, and then in chorus, emit the tremulous croak which had excited my attention. Should the weather still continue warm, every day adds to the number of heads, and the spawn rapidly accumulates in a shallow corner of the well. The croaking is now so loud as to be heard at some distance, not merely from the increase of voices, but that each note acquires double force, the more warm and genial the day. When the cold returns, as in our springs it is so apt to do, many of the frogs seek their winter covering, and the croak

of those that remain dwindles into a faint treble, instead of their full diapason. A touch of frost will cause all the frogs to disappear, and make the top of the spawn as white as an oyster. But the first warm sun and mild air bring them to the surface again, and restore the spawn to its original colour. It is then most curious to observe their gambols, jumping and tumbling about like boys at *leap-frog*—and no doubt the origin of this favourite game of the playground. After a time the frogs all leave the pool, and small black eggs are formed in the spawn, which gradually increase in size until little tadpoles emerge.

But now a more interesting visitor may sometimes be seen. The first burst of spring has brought into life the earlier insects, and with them the subtle, active trout. In this little pond I have counted three; two of them very small, the other about six inches long. My attention was first directed to them one fine July evening, when I saw what appeared to be fish rising. I crept forward, and soon perceived the larger trout amidst a crowd of summer insects, some buzzing about the surface, and others settling upon it. He was sucking them down lazily and at intervals, like a finished gourmand at a satisfactory dinner. But here the resemblance ends; for, upon my stepping forward, he darted to the other side of the tank, with a celerity very unlike the respected gentleman aforesaid when leaving his ample board. In my evening walks I seldom omitted to take a peep at the little pond, and

soon discovered that my spotted friend was not solitary; and one or other of them was almost always to be seen during the season.

Spring came round again, and I resolved to watch the first appearance of these trout. Accordingly, as soon as I noticed fish rising in the streams, I went to the pond several times a-day. It was not, however, till the beginning of April that I perceived the largest trout looking very heavy and dull, but making no attempt to feed. I watched it for a quarter of an hour, when, contrary to its usual custom of darting among the bushes at the opposite side for a hiding-place, it sank down among the leaves and mud, head foremost, like an eel. The manner of its passing the winter was now evident, and as the evening was chilly, it had again sought the warmth of its muddy quarters.

A third inmate of this little pool excited my curiosity and interest more than either of the others. During the warm summer nights several large eels were constantly disporting among the soft mud, particularly after rain. Each had its corner of the pond, and they seldom invaded the other's territories. They were five in number; two rather larger than the others, one of them a yellowish green, the other a dark brown; indeed they were all of different hues, and the shade of their colour was my first distinguishing mark. This leads me to suppose that fish do not *always* take their colour from that of the water, or from the quality of the bottom. I know it is often

the case, especially with trout; and I have seen fish caught on a mossy soil, nearly black, while those taken on a clear golden sand were bright yellow, though in the same loch.

But to return to my friends the eels. It was nothing uncommon to see several of them peeping out of a separate retreat in their own premises. The head of one, perhaps, from behind a decayed leaf—the whole body of another laid alongside a piece of stick, which it so nearly resembled as to be scarcely distinguishable. Indeed it required some practice to perceive them at all, and I have been nearly a minute before discovering one, though several were in sight. Having some curiosity to find out whether any more eels would get into this place should the original occupants be taken away, I, by means of a hook and strong gut-line, at different times pulled out the whole five. They took the bait readily, but it was rather difficult to hook them, as they held it for some time across their mouth without swallowing, after the manner of pike. I observed that these eels were more shy than those I had taken in lochs and rivers, but in excellent condition. They were never replaced, however, during the time that I had the opportunity of watching. The trout remained unmolested, and seemed also to thrive.

During sultry weather, the eels often rested the lower part of their bodies on the mud, and raised their noses to the top of the water; when in this position

they had a very serpent-like appearance, and might have been easily mistaken for snakes. I never saw this done by eels before; but, if noticed in the like attitude by a Loch Lomond sage, it might perhaps account for one of the three wonders ascribed to that water—viz., fish without fins, waves without wind, and a floating island.

THE MOOR-BURN.

I DON'T know whether the moor-burn more properly belongs to the Moor or the Loch; but, as it begins in the one and ends in the other, it was rather an omission on my part to have left it out in my first edition, especially as at certain times of the year it affords excellent sport to the angler who penetrates the wilds.

When in ordinary trim, the moor-burn is generally neglected by the finished adept, as a more fitting amusement for the schoolboy during his summer holidays; and certainly nothing can be easier than to kill a basketful of burn-trout at such a season. To do this in as short a time as possible, treat them with earth-worms baited upon a smallish hook. They will rise well at the fly, but the worm is more deadly. As you have often queer-looking places to scramble up, where a longer and smarter turn-out would be sadly in the way, use a coarse short rod, very small

reel, and casting-line of good single gut. I have generally been most successful when the burn was small, the trout being then eager for worms, having tasted few since the last flood. The great point at such a time is to keep out of sight, by dropping the bait over a rock, or from behind a bush or tuft of heather. There is generally sufficient motion in these rocky streams to prevent your line from being seen by the trout, and they will seize the bait with such avidity that I have sometimes, when a boy, taken a dozen out of one pool, or *linn*, as they are called. Many prefer the burn a little swollen, and in this state it is certainly easier for the unscientific craftsman, who is then much less likely to be observed by the trout. But if he took proper care to conceal himself, he would not only find them more greedy when the burn is small, but would be better able to detect their usual haunts, which they are very apt to leave when the water rises. When the linns are black, and whirl round in eddies, let the bait humour the water; in fact, the only art in fishing them is to make the worm appear naturally to follow the course of the stream. When, again, the burn flows over *level ground*, lengthen your line, as you have there more difficulty in keeping out of sight. Fish all the streams and deep-looking places; and, if need be, don't grudge to crawl to them on hand and knee, or you will often be detected by the quick-sighted trout when the water is clear. To fish the moor-burn in

this way is capital practice for the novice in angling; with a little attention, he will seldom return with an empty creel. In the Balnaguard burn, which runs into the Tay near Logierait in Perthshire, I killed nine dozen and two in a few hours. I tried the burn by the advice of an old gardener, who told me he had one day killed nine dozen in it himself. So having equalled him, with two to spare, I washed my hands of bait-fishing during the rest of my sojourn on the banks of the Tay.

Of trout so caught, not above one in fifty averages a quarter of a pound. But there is another manner of fishing the deep linns and rocky eddies, which is difficult, and sometimes even dangerous, except for a steady head and practised hand. Yet if love of adventure should entice the angler to try it, he will be rewarded by larger trout, and perhaps a heavier creel.

In most of the small Highland burns, there is a succession of cataracts and pools, with a parapet of rock rising perpendicularly on each side, and often scarcely footing enough for a dog to pass. The greater proportion of picturesque-looking *brethren of the angle* would almost start at the idea of continuing their pastime under such disadvantages. They therefore make a circuit, and come down again upon the burn, where it is more easy to fish, and the ground less rugged. The trout in these places are thus left till many of them grow large, and each, taking possession

of a favourite nook, drives all the smaller fry away. The difficulty of reaching these places is, I admit, often great, the angler sometimes having to scramble up on his hands and knees, covered with wet moss or gravel, and then to drag his fishing-rod after him. These linns should always be fished up stream, otherwise, the moment you appear at the top of the waterfall or rock, the trout are very likely to see you, and slink into their hiding-place. The burn, however, must always be low, as at no other time can you distinguish the snug retreat of these tyrants—which indeed they often leave, during the slightest flood, in search of prey. By fishing up the stream, your head will be on a level with the different eddies and pools, as they successively present themselves, and the rest of your person will be out of sight. Hold the baited hook with the left hand, jerking out the rod, under-handed, with your right, so as to make the bait fall softly at the lower end of the pool. The trout always take their station either there or at the top where the water flows in, ready to pounce on worms, snails, slugs, &c., as they enter or leave the pool. Should a trout seize the bait, a little time may be given to allow it to gorge, which it will most likely do without much ceremony. If large, care must be taken to prevent it from getting to the top of the linn, which may probably harbour another expectant. The best plan is, if possible, to persuade it to descend into the pool

below.[1] Having deposited the half-pounder in your creel, you will now crawl upon hands and knees, just as near the top of the linn as will enable you to drop the bait immediately below the bubbling foam—nearly as favourite a station for an over-grown monopolising trout as the other. Except in such situations, the burn-trout seldom exceeds a quarter of a pound, and may be pulled out with single gut, without much risk of breaking it. In these linns, however, I have frequently taken them upwards of a pound, which is easily accounted for. As soon as the trout grows to a sufficient size to intimidate his pigmy neighbours, he falls back into the best pool for feeding not occupied by a greater giant than himself; and as these linns are almost always in places very difficult of access, he remains undisturbed and alone, or with a single companion, driving all others away, until he may at last exceed a pound in weight.

I have seen two curious instances of the rapid growth of the burn-trout under such circumstances, from the size of a parr to fully half a pound. They were deposited in separate spring-wells, about three

[1] In fishing a small pool, where you have reason to think the salmon have congregated, the same method ought to be adopted. When you hook one, tumble him over out of the pool down stream; at all events, prevent him, if you possibly can, from disturbing the throat, where there may be some more. If the fish are at all tractable when first hooked, several may in this way be taken out of the same pool; whereas by fishing down stream, should a salmon be hooked at the throat of the pool, he will so frighten the others that very probably no more may rise.

feet deep and five round. The trout in neither had any means of escape, and became so tame as to seize worms, minnows, &c., when dropped from the hand. One of them was within a hundred yards of Ardenconnell House in Dumbartonshire, where I then lived. It had been in the spring about four years, and although large-headed and lean-looking, as all overgrown burn-trout are, seemed in good health and *spirits*. It always came to the top of the water for the remains of my minnows, when I returned from trolling; and on one occasion I emptied a pailful of live ones into the spring, which not only gave it several hearty meals, but exercise and amusement to boot. It pursued and seized them with a rapidity the eye could scarcely follow. At last the poor minnows, from several dozen, decreased in number to three or four, who only escaped the fate of their companions by discovering a small crack between two stones; and I noticed that the trout soon ceased to molest them, having discovered that the attempt would be vain, as they always kept close to their refuge. This trout may be still alive; but the other, I have heard, is dead, after a solitary existence in the spring of nine years' duration!

But to return to the burn. Although when small or in ordinary trim the angler must be content with its common inmates, yet the time to fish it in perfection is during the floods at the end of summer and beginning of autumn. The sea-trout, salmon, and

grilse then come up in great numbers. To select the proper moment for commencing operations is the main point. Many of the smaller burns remain in proper trim for so short a time that the angler ought to be waiting at the side, ready to begin fishing as soon as the white muddy water has run out, and the burn assumes the deep red tinge. After it decreases to a certain point, he will hardly raise a single fish. Nay, he would even stand a better chance *before* the water is sufficiently clear, with an enormous gaudy fly, with which, should he come half an hour too soon, he may amuse himself until it is time to put on the proper ones.

As I have already said, every experienced angler is well aware how capricious are the salmon, sea-trout, and grilse of different streams as to their flies. I was in the habit of fishing sea-trout of three burns in the same neighbourhood (two of them running into the same sea-loch), each of which had its favourite fly. I often put on the chosen three, and fished them all in turn; but invariably, when the water was in *its best state,* the fish in each were most constant to their own fly. I merely mention the fact without attempting to account for it, and will name the flies to show that the difference was considerable: one was a yellow and green, or red and green body, red hackle, and either teal or light-speckled mallard-wing; another a blue body, red hackle, and turkey-wing; and the third (for the burn

which ran into a different loch) a green body, thread of gold tinsel, red hackle, and dark-mottled mallard-wing. The second-mentioned of these flies, with the addition of an orange tuft, is one of the best that can be used for spring and summer salmon on the Tweed, if the water is in its ordinary state; and by lessening the hook as the river decreases, you may continue to kill fish with it when the water is so small that they will not look at any other.[1]

As to the most killing flies for particular burns, it is impossible that any rule can be given; this is a point which one's own observation, or the information of adepts in the neighbourhood, alone can decide. But supposing them chosen, we will now proceed to throw them. If unacquainted with the burn, you should never pass over the streams, eddies, &c., when it first runs clear; and as it decreases in size pay most attention to the pools. If the "spate" or flood has not been very heavy, the fish will soon refuse to

[1] The best turkey-feathers for the wings of salmon and sea-trout flies are those with the smallest spots,—very difficult to procure; and nothing can stand a comparison with the forked tail of the kite, when a red-brown wing is required for salmon.

Flies for salmon ought to be fastened to the gut in a different manner from any others—viz., with a small loop of double or triple gut, through which the length of gut is passed and tied with a double knot. You may thus fish always with good strong single gut, next the hook, cutting it off and making a fresh knot whenever it chafes at the shank. This method, of course, will not be very strenuously recommended at the fishing-tackle maker's, as, by the usual way, the fly is of no more use when the gut cracks or chafes close to the hook —which, unless double, or even triple, it will soon do.

rise at all. It is then that a man who knows the water will often kill a fish or two, when perhaps an angler equally expert, but without this advantage, would stand little chance. I once in this way astonished a fellow-craftsman, no mean performer either. I was at the burn-side just at the proper moment, and having fished the best of the water, was about to return after killing a couple of fine sea-trout, when I saw a rival, with whom I was unacquainted, trotting down to the bank. His first salutation was, "Are the fish rising?" He then desired to see my flies, being a stranger to the burn. As he seemed what is called "a *greedy* angler," I thought it no harm to take a *rise* out of *him*. The water by this time was long past its best; so, after supplying him with a fly, I said I would not interfere, but walk down and show him the casts. He was evidently a good fisher, but, as I anticipated, did not kill a fish, and only rose one. In the burn there was one very strong eddy, where the trout never rose to the fly, but where I seldom missed taking one with the worm, when the water was at all swollen. On coming near this place I said, if he had done nothing it was not his fault, but that I would now try my luck. I then let him go a good way ahead, took off my flies, put on a bait-hook and worm, and from this place pulled out two whitlings half-a-pound weight. I then whipped on my flies again, and overtook him at the end of the burn. I could hardly keep my gravity at his aston-

ished face when I showed him my success. He never suspected the bait; and I soon took my leave, wishing him better sport the next spate!

Sea-trout, after the burn has run small, will never rise to the fly; they fall back to the pools, and, as anglers say, *stick to the bottom*, where they may often be seen. At such times they are also very unwilling to take a bait, and the only chance is to try both pools and streams with the minnow *after it becomes nearly dark*. I recollect once, when the water was quite dwindled, taking a very fine one with worm; but although I have often tried the same pools before and since, never with success. I had been fishing a small moor-loch in company with another angler, and thought of returning home by the burn, and trying the steep linns with bait for a sea-trout. My companion laughed at the idea, saying, that to catch one then was totally out of the question. I thought the same, but having plenty of time, resolved to make the attempt; so, selecting one or two of the largest pools, where the rocks on each side rose perpendicularly, darkening the water, I gently and slowly let down the bait, allowing the worm but no part of the line to touch the water. After one or two attempts I hooked and killed a fine trout, fresh from the sea, and as white as silver. So small was the burn that he never even tried to get out of the pool, and my great difficulty was to scramble down the precipice in order to secure him. This trifling occurrence would

not be worth mentioning, did it not serve to show that an angler always *has a chance*, however little he suspects it, if his energy and perseverance do not fail. Perhaps the following may be a still better instance of the efficacy of this latter qualification, when science and skill have been found unavailing. One of the fat lazy trout of the Thames, which I detected feeding near a lock above Henley Bridge, after refusing my artificial flies, a bleak, and a minnow, I hooked at last with a common *bee* sunk like worm, which I had intended for a chub, and happened to think might take his fancy![1]

Having named the noble Thames, I cannot let him pass without a tribute. I have had many an enchanting fishing-day on its banks, and if I cannot but prefer those waters to which early associations bind me, yet the pleasure of wandering along the green banks of the southern streams, as they sweep through the clovery meadow or the fringing copse, is perhaps increased by contrasting them with the grey rocks and purple hills of my country; while the laugh of the woodpecker, the song of the nightingale, the "azure plume" of the little halcyon as he flits past on a calm summer's eve, are noticed with a more lively interest when substituted for the swoop of the eagle and the crow of the "gorcock."

[1] The above examples are not related for imitation, as they would probably be unsuccessful ninety-nine times out of a hundred, but merely to enforce the advantage of patience—the angler's good genius.

LOCH-FISHING.

THE true angler is almost always a lover of nature; if not, he loses half the pleasure of his art. In following the river's course, he must of necessity pass through the finest and most varied scenery; and that, too, at a time when beauty crowns the year. But, enchanting as are the woodland banks of the quiet stream, there is to me a higher and yet more powerful charm in the solitary wildness or savage grandeur of the Highland loch. The very *stillness* of those bare hills and craggy summits, broken only by the rushing of some rapid burn that intersects them, has a tendency to elevate, while it calms the mind; and I envy not the man who could frequent such scenes and not feel them.

But if the proficient in the gentle craft has an eye equally keen to the beauties so lavishly scattered around him, it happens no less often that the admirer of nature's wildest charms fancies himself an angler.

Our man of taste has perhaps fished a few rivers near him, in the spring, when trout are lean and hungry; and, having chosen a propitious day, has sometimes returned with a tolerable creelful. He then starts on his pleasure-tour, and of course his fishing-rod forms an important accompaniment. At first he makes some determined attacks upon the finny tribe; but being generally unsuccessful, his rod is laid aside, and, after having been delighted with the sublimities and beauties of half the Highlands, he returns home with but an indifferent account of his piscatorial achievements. To such a one I particularly address the few simple directions in loch-fishing which time and patience have enabled me to collect.

There are particular times in every season when trout more readily take in many of the Highland lochs, and these it should be the angler's first study to discover. For instance, the best time for trolling with the minnow, in Loch Vennachar, is from the end of February to the middle of May, when large fish may be taken. They never rise well at the fly in this loch. In Loch Lomond, the trolling does not begin till May, and only lasts till the middle of June, when the fly-fishing commences. More may then be caught, but, with the exception of sea-trout, seldom nearly so large as with the minnow. In Loch Katrine, you may troll with success all the season. The fishing in Lochs Earn, Lubnaig, and Voil is not good till May: the trout in these lochs being small, they

are never trolled except for the gillaroo, which inhabits them all, and sometimes grows to a great size. The trouting in Loch Ard is best at an early part of the year, falling off very much as the season advances; while Lochs Chon and Dhu, not so good as Loch Ard at the beginning of it, are much better afterwards. In short, a number of the lochs in the Highlands may, at certain times, be either fly-fished or trolled with greater success. There are also some which may be fished either way throughout the season; the angler's judgment determining which, as wind, water, and sky suggest. These, if inhabited by pike, are my particular favourites, especially when the greater part of the shore is so clear of weeds as to make one independent of a boat.

Many people think a loch injured by pike: on the contrary, unless very numerous, as in Loch Menteith, I have seldom seen one much worth fishing without them; always excepting those where the Loch Awe trout or gillaroo are to be found. If a man prefers killing eight or nine dozen, with scarcely a half-pounder among them, to a dozen fine trout from half-a-pound to three pounds weight, then he may count the pike his enemy; but the latter feat will both better prove his skill and afford him much greater sport. He who wishes to excel in angling will leave the loch with its tiny multitude to the bungler, and select the other, where all his science will be called into play.

The reason why yellow trout are always large

where there are pike is obvious: the small fry are all devoured by the latter, and the others, having more food, increase in size. A few years ago, Loch Katrine was chock-full of very small trout, which have gradually become larger since pike have been introduced; and now two or three dozen fine red trout may be taken in a day.

There are two other small lochs near Loch Katrine which breed very large pike, and are full of prime trout, Loch Arklet and Loch Drunkie—but they are less fortunate than their neighbours in not having been immortalised by our great Minstrel. The latter especially, from its ill-sounding name, we cannot wonder that a poet discards; but an angler will realise its attractions. The shores of these lochs being almost clear of weeds, and the ground firm, the best parts may be reached by wading, and fish may be taken from half-a-pound to three pounds weight. Upon one occasion, when playing a good-sized trout in Loch Drunkie, an enormous pike made several dashes, and at last succeeded in seizing it. I used every effort to frighten him away; but so determined was he, that, though I could see him quite plainly in shallow water, with my trout held across his tremendous jaws, he would not be beat off; and at last, when kicking the water I strained my line, he gave a plunge, broke my rod, and escaped with his prey.

FLY-FISHING.

The flies I have generally found best for loch-fishing are a light-speckled or brown-mottled mallard-wing, according to the day; reddish-brown mohair body, red hackle, and No. 7 hook, tied with yellow silk, for a trail; and a teal-wing, claret-colour mohair body, black hackle, and No. 6 hook, tied with orange or yellow silk for a bob. If the loch is full and muddy, add a small thread of silver tinsel to the latter, and increase the size of both: in large lochs a green body is also very killing. In fishing a loch where the trout are small, diminish the size of your hook; even in river-fishing, I seldom use any but those I have named, only much smaller and without the mohair —adding a hare's-ear body and woodcock-wing early in the season, and a mouse body and snipe-wing at a later period.

Should the loch you are fishing contain sea-trout or salmon, ascertain from any good fisher in the neighbourhood what are the most killing flies, and tie them for yourself. Should you not be "up to this," *beg, borrow, or buy them from him.* In fishing with a long line, from a boat, let the trail be either a sea-trout or salmon fly; but if throwing from shore, never use the latter except by itself. When a salmon rises, whether in a loch or a river, you may allow him a second or two longer than a trout. He may be *safely*

permitted to turn before you strike. A two-handed rod, large reel with plenty of line, and the lightest tackle, are necessary.

If the wind is so high as to cause decided waves upon one of these small lochs, you will succeed much better with the minnow-tackle than the fly; indeed, the best plan then is to troll for pike, with a parr: they always take best in high wind, but are so capricious that you may have three runs in half an hour on one day, and perhaps not one in several apparently favourable days. High wind is prejudicial to fly-fishing in lochs where the trout are large, because it scatters them into unlikely places; and being, of course, much fewer in number than when small, you are not so apt to stumble upon them: the waves also prevent their seeing the fly so readily.

When there is a fine even breeze, immediately repair to the loch. Begin to fish those parts where the wind blows fairest from the shore; if you know the loch well, you have a great advantage. The trout have many feeding-places, and shift from one to another with the slightest change of the wind. Near some one of these they generally keep watching the breeze, which blows them flies and insects. They are usually in companies—so when the angler hooks one, he should endeavour to get it away from the rest; he will then most likely rise another the next throw or two. He must keep a very sharp look-out for these places, and may generally detect them by the rising

of the trout. They sometimes, but not so often, feed singly.

When a fish takes the fly, raise your arm with a sort of *indescribable* turn of the wrist: if this is done with a *jerk*, the fly is whipped away from the trout; but if omitted altogether, it will often make its escape, after feeling the hook. It is for want of knack in this particular that so many trout are lost after having risen to the fly. When you hook a good fish that never shows above water, but swims low with a dead heavy pull, be very cautious; it is most likely tenderly hooked, and, with the least strain upon the line, will break away.

The shore, in many parts of the lochs, is fringed with weeds, beyond which you may cast by wading. Should you hook a trout in such a situation, and not find an opening to lead it through, use every endeavour to keep it from the weeds: and when quite tired out, raise its head above water, and tow it rapidly over them. If you can reach beyond the weeds with your landing-net, the difficulty in a great measure ceases.

When salmon or trout spring out of the water, you may be sure that neither will *be so apt to rise to your fly*, whether in lochs or rivers.

THE MINNOW-TACKLE.[1]

In fishing for trout with the minnow, I also prefer a moderate breeze, unless in bright sunshine, when more wind is necessary. Your tackle should be the very best single gut, dyed with strong tea, or anything to take the shine off; a No. 13 hook and two No. 8's tied back to back: two swivels are enough, and no lead on the line. Any one with the least knowledge of angling knows how to bait. The large hook enters the minnows mouth and is brought out near the tail, which is curved in order to make it spin; one of the others is passed through its lips. A fly-top makes the minnow spin more lively, and is therefore preferable to a bait one: the rod-makers will say the reverse. In river-fishing, another branch and couple of small hooks fastened to the gut, and fixed in the minnow's side, are often used; but I do not recommend them for the lochs.

The best, though most tedious way of casting, is to gather the line with your right hand, and, letting the minnow hang down about a yard, throw it out, shifting the rod at the same time from the left hand to

[1] It is very necessary to have wire-cages for small burn-trout, parr, and minnow. By sinking the cages in the nearest burn, leaving the tops above water for air, and feeding the live bait with small worms, they will thrive for months. If the cages are placed in a loch or any still water, they are apt to die; and if the cage-tops are not above water, they will be drowned for lack of air.

the right: you can thus make further casts, and the minnow lasts twice as long. If the wind is high, try all the sheltered bays; you may then often hook a fish where you would otherwise have had little chance. Sink the minnow a few inches below the surface, and when you see or feel a bite, slacken your line a little: when you strike, it must be done with much more force than in fly-fishing.

When trolling from a boat, the less the breeze the longer the line; sink it with lead to a considerable depth. In baiting, use a No. 9 hook through the minnow's lips, and a 13 or 14 through the tail (*vide* cut). You thus bait much more quickly, and the

minnow's appearance is not so apt to be injured; its tail can also be curved up, more or less, to make it spin true. Thus baited, you may troll with it from a boat for half a day; but if you attempt to cast, it will very soon be thrown off. Always take with you two coarse trolling-rods that you do not mind sinking in the water, and very large reels with plenty of line —or oiled cord, if you wish.

Your boatman should be well acquainted with the ground; but if he is not, endeavour to troll between the shallow and the deep, where the trout are on the outlook. Find out if there are any sunk rocks or

banks, and troll round them also. Always sweep past the mouths of any rivers or brooks; they are very likely places either with minnow or fly.

Troll as much as possible with the wind, although in fly-fishing it is best to row against it. Take care, when you hook a fish, that your boatman does not strain your line in the former case, nor slacken it in the latter; either of which he is apt to do, by lying upon his oars, watching your proceedings. You must, in fact, direct his slightest movement. When the waters are large and deep, such as Loch Lomond and Loch Awe, the heaviest trout and salmon are always taken by trolling with small trout, minnow, or parr.

If the loch is frequented by salmon, have one of your rods baited with a parr; and, if passing any of his haunts near the shore, take your fly-rod, land, and throw from it, but do not go near the place with the boat. Should no fish rise after you have thrown some time, take off your fly, put on a large bait-hook and two floats, one about six yards from the other; the line is thus prevented from dangling near the hook, which must hang down about four yards from the last float, baited with two large dew-worms in the following manner: Enter the hook at the tail of one, and bring it out about one-fourth of an inch below the head; pull up the worm upon the gut; then put in the hook about one-fourth of an inch below the head of the other, leaving the same length of worm at the point—this moves about, and entices

the salmon; pull down the first worm to the other, and your hook is baited. (*Vide* cut.) When the

float disappears, be in no hurry to strike till the fish has *tightened* the line; you are thus pretty sure of its head being turned away, and consequently have a better chance of hooking. This should only be attempted where the shores are deep and rocky, on a cloudy day, with a stiff breeze from the south or west, and skiffs of rain. Do not give up hope too soon, for the salmon are generally swimming in small shoals backwards and forwards along the shore; a little time may thus elapse before they pass where you are fishing.

Should the weather unfortunately become too calm for day fishing, you may often hook a large cunning fish by waiting till dusk of evening, letting out a very long line, and sinking your rod in the water, with the butt against your shoulder. The biggest fish are always on the search for food at this time; and perhaps the most killing bait in calm clear weather is a loach—also excellent for large perch, some of which I have caught, when trolling, between two and three pounds weight.

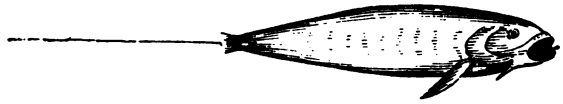
TROLLING FOR PIKE.

The common way of rod-fishing for pike in the Highlands is with a running-bait—a parr, or small trout, and plenty of hooks, tied back to back on gimp, stuck all round it; also a couple of large swivels, and the line a little loaded with lead. They always take best mornings and evenings, except on very windy days; so, if the angler is inclined to try a cast for pike, after having filled his creel with trout, he may begin about six o'clock.

The Gorge-Troll.

Trolling with the gorge is often very deadly in weedy lochs, especially small openings that cannot be fished with the running-bait. I have seldom, however, seen it used in Scotland, except in a very clumsy way—a large double hook, armed upon wire, with the bait inverted, and no attempt to make it spin: unless pike are in a very hungry mood, this is not very enticing. The proper gorge-hook is a small double one, commonly used for eels, with very sharp barbs, slightly turned inwards; the shank loaded with lead, in order to make the bait sink quickly, and enable you to make far casts with precision. This hook is fastened by a small brass ring to about a foot of gimp (you require a baiting-needle): after cutting off the tail and all the fins but one of the top side

ones, hook on the loop of the gimp to the needle, and insert it at the mouth of the bait, bringing it out at the middle of the fork of the tail; the lead and shank of the hook will thus be hid in the mouth and belly of the bait, and only the barbs and points be visible. Tie the tail to the gimp with thread. (*Vide*



cut.) After casting, let the bait sink to the bottom, then draw it to the top, and the single fin will make it spin beautifully. When a pike seizes, you must not be in hurry to strike, or you have small chance of hooking: let out your line with your hand; give him sufficient time to gorge the bait, and then he is fast and firm as you could wish. Use a coarse trolling-rod, with large strong rings, and reel of oiled cord: no swivel is required. Some use a large gaudy fly for pike; I never do so, and do not recommend it, though I have sometimes caught small pike even with a common trout-fly.

It is much more easy to find out the haunts of pike than those of trout. The best places are in and near the weedy bays. Fish all these with the running-bait, and, if possible, by wading, cast immediately beyond the weeds, between the shallow and the deep water; this, however, the sinking mud will often prevent your accomplishing. If you have found the pike

on the feed, you may return over the same ground with the gorge, trying all the openings among the weeds that you could not fish with the running-bait. I never troll for pike from a boat unless they cannot be reached any other way.

SET-LINES AND TRIMMERS FOR PIKE.

Although rod-fishing for pike affords undoubtedly the best sport, and requires much greater skill, yet by far the most deadly way is with set-lines. This is either done with a long line, and from twelve to twenty hooks, or with single hooks, fixed to a bottle or other equally buoyant float, called a trimmer. I have also heard of tying baited hooks to the legs of geese, and turning them adrift: when a pike seizes the bait, the goose begins to flap its wings, and there is often considerable sport in the struggle; but it is certainly a most cruel diversion, especially if a large pike is hooked. The humane man will be more amused with the trimmer, which I have often practised with great success.

After very tightly corking up the bottles, and fastening the cord to them, let from two to eight feet hang down, according to the depth of the water; fix a large double pike-hook, armed upon brass wire, and baited with a small perch, trout, roach, or frog to each: be sure to cut off the perch's dorsal fin and

lower part of the gills. The baits are inverted, the barbs of the hook projecting from their mouths. The best time for this amusement is on one of those delicious evenings with scarcely a breath of air, when the shadow of the mountain becomes more imposing on the unrippled loch, and twilight begins to steal over the scene. Let the hum of the beetle be your warning bell.

Having arranged all your tackle, and baited your hooks, place them *regularly* in a light two-oared boat, and row to the weedy bay. You will now drop them one by one, about twenty yards apart, outside the weeds, between the shallow and the deep.[1] The pike have been basking all the sultry day in the shallows, and are just emerging from their green covering in search of food. The first object that arrests their hungry eyes and craving stomachs is your tantalising bait, suspended at such a distance from the surface as to excite no apprehension, and as to be perfectly still. With avidity it is seized and pouched: down goes the bottle. Scarcely, perhaps, has it disappeared, when another follows its example: it is nothing uncommon to have four or five all bobbing up and down at the same time. The sport now begins, the angler stretching to

[1] Sometimes, when the water is unconfined, it is necessary to fasten the trimmers to prevent their floating away. Cut poles of about ten feet; fix a heavy stone, with a piece of twine longer than the depth of the water, to one end, and the trimmer with another piece of twine to the other end of the pole, which lies flat on the top of the water and prevents the fastening-line from dangling near the bait.

his oars, first after one, then another, as they alternately rise and sink. If large pike are hooked, they will often keep their tormentor under water for a minute at a time; and *to run the whole down* is no contemptible evening's exercise.

THE LONG-LINE FOR PIKE.

In setting a long-line for pike, fix branches of small whip-cord to it, about a yard in length, and three yards apart from each other; the same hooks as described above appended to them, and baited in the same way. The line is set in a like situation to the floats, in the following manner: After driving a pole into the mud, fasten the end of your line to it. Your companion will now row leisurely along, whilst you lift out hook after hook, until you come to the end of the line; having done so, fix it to another pole, and drive this also into the mud. Do not make the line too "taut," or it will not hang low enough for the pike: no floats are required. The line may remain all night, and has thus the morning and evening chance.

EELS.

As lines for eels are of course set at the bottom, a short description of the way to do so may be necessary. Fasten a stone to the end of the line, to which also append a branch with a float—the same at the other end; the line thus lies flat upon the ground, the floats showing exactly where. Eels may be set for in rather deeper places than pike; but be sure there is a soft muddy bottom. Both hooks and baits must be a great deal less than when setting for pike, the former armed upon strong wire. Cut the fish, or whatever you bait with, into small pieces, just large enough to cover the hook, and fix them firmly on. I recollect catching five or six beautiful eels at one haul, with no other bait than two frogs; the legs set upon some of the hooks like worm, and the bodies, cut into several pieces, for the others. The drawing of an eel-line, what with twisting and slime, is often sorry work; if a large swivel was appended to each hook, it would both tend to prevent this and increase the chance of success. It is of little use to set single hooks for eels, as the great likelihood is that the first that comes may have a mouth too small for sucking in your hook, *but large enough to devour your bait;* in fact, there are twenty small for one large; and from a line of three dozen hooks, it is a very good night's work to kill half-a-dozen large eels.

I have thus given an outline of the different kinds of fishing in fresh-water lochs except perch, which *float and worm recreation*, as it has come under the ban of Dr Johnson, I might leave the novice to find out for himself. All he has to do is to ascertain their haunt, which any one in the vicinity can show; fasten a float to his line, and a No. 10 hook; bait with an earth-worm; throw in without art; and give the fish time to gorge the bait before striking, or it may slip out of its capacious mouth after being sucked in.

MOUNTAIN TARNS.

There are a number of little mountain tarns in the neighbourhood of Inverary, most of them well stocked. A chain of lochans, about eight miles over the hills, is well worth the fly-fisher's attention. I climbed to them, one balmy day, with my fly-trouting rod, and a few casts round my hat. The scenery from the tops of the hills did not much hit my fancy, although the views of Loch Fyne and the opposite glens no doubt are pleasing. It was a long dreary walk, with few objects of interest to shorten it, except the instinctive wiles of a moss-cheeper (meadow-pipit) and a merlin to decoy me from their respective nests. The pipit really deceived me at first, so completely did it sham a broken leg and wing. As for the little falcon, although I marked the very spot she

rose from, all my ingenuity could not discover her young. She flew about, appearing quite unconcerned so long as I kept near this place; but when I walked away, she always pitched down, making a great fuss, as much as to say, "Keep off my nest: here it is"—giving me a false direction as plainly as a bird could speak.

The first lochan of the chain, named Camisdown, lies much lower than the others, and is a good deal the largest. Some of the trout in it are eight or ten pounds weight. I only got one rise, and secured a fish of about a pound. There are few days in the year that they rise well in this loch, and bait is more acceptable than fly. The other little tarns are upon the tops of the hills. Two of them contain no fish, and look as if they were dead, when contrasted with the others — all alive from the continual rising of trout. In a few hours I filled my creel (a pretty large one), and might easily have stocked it again, as the day was good for the fly, and the fish keen.

THE WEEDY LOCH.

A fisherman in the neighbourhood gave me a strange account of a moss-hole—for it deserves no more dignified name—which breeds trout of twelve pounds weight. As the "weedy loch" was only half an hour's walk from Inverary, I took advantage of the

first favourable day to give it a trial, both with fly and bait, for one of these monsters. I thought my guide was joking when he pointed to a shallow hole, no bigger than an English duck-pond, and so overgrown with water-plants that there were scarcely three square yards clear. After I had watched for a little time, a great break of the water, but slow and heavy, in the midst of the weeds, betokened the kind of customers I should have to deal with. The trolling-rod was quickly baited, but there was some difficulty in finding opening enough for the hook to sink. After shifting several times, for the great bubbles at top of the water were still seen at distant intervals, I put on the most approved fly for the "weedy loch,"—viz., a red wing from the landrail's feather (a partridge tail feather will do as well), and a green body. It was the strangest fishing I ever attempted, to pitch the fly at every open space, however small, and twitch back again without playing it an inch. Even thus, you were almost sure of a weed at each endeavour. I did hook a fish, however, and, thanks to the goodness of my tackle, landed him in spite of the weeds. It was the shortest, thickest, and most silvery yellow trout I ever brought to the bank of loch or river. Weight, two pounds and a half. Angus, my guide, told me that all the very large ones were caught with worm; but a dull, windy, showery day was indispensable, so none would look at mine.

I gave the trouts an hour's rest, and during this in-

terval had an account of a Loch Fyne herring-fisher's life, from Angus, a frank athletic young man, the skipper and part owner of a boat. The fleet of scows, which are always hauled up high and dry to refit after the season is over, were all launching at present, and Angus meant to set sail in ten days. When shooting their nets, they had their choice of the best herrings to eat; for when they sold them "by the dizen,[1] the warst made up the coont, and fetched the same price as the best." In the creeks and lochs where they anchored, they could always get milk from the shepherds' shielings and bothies scattered along the banks, which milk from the little Highland cattle, grazed in the sheltered straths and glens, "was as rich as cream every drap o't." Some of the fishermen, he said, "*indulged in dirt;*" which luxury, however, he strictly prohibited in his boat.

It was now time to take to my rod again, and go over all the open places with the fly. Another trout actually rose and hooked at the same spot as the former one; but in straining to prevent his entanglement in the weeds, his hold broke. The "weedy loch" is a novelty to most anglers, and well worth a visit on that account.

[1] Various sizes of herring frequent different lochs. They are called "skulls;" and the Loch Fyne skull is so much larger than the others that five hundred go to a cran, while seven hundred from Loch Long are required to make it.

FISHING ON SALT-WATER LOCHS.

THE sea-loch has a character peculiarly its own,—no wooded islands—no green or pebbly margin, like its inland sister, except perhaps for a short time at full tide; and the dark mountain more often rises abruptly from its side in craggy and bold relief. It is a novel sight for the traveller, whom the refreshing evening breeze has tempted out of the neighbouring inn, at the landlord's recommendation, to try his fishing luck with such a clumsy rod and tackle as he had never dreamt of before. The awkward-looking herring "skows," well matched with their black or red sails, scudding in all directions; the nasal twang of the Gaelic, as they pass the bow or stern of his boat, shooting their nets; the hardy, weather-beaten face of the Highlander, always civil in his reply, and courteous in pointing out the most likely ground to the "stranger"—reiterating his injunctions (when his stock of English extends no further) "to keep on the

broo," yet plainly showing that he expects the like courtesy in return, and that the least slip on your part would immediately make him change his tone,—all this can hardly fail to impress on the mind of the imaginative, that the spirit of the Highlands, though dormant, is not dead, and to carry back his fancy to the old times of clans, caterans, and claymores.[1]

The fishing of the sea-loch is not nearly so scientific as that of the inland. The great art lies in being thoroughly acquainted with the best state of the tide for commencing operations—in having a perfect knowledge of the fishing-ground, and being able to set your long-line with neatness and despatch. Having lived

[1] It is often amusing to see how easily the warm blood will boil, even in those whom years and hardship might have cooled. The following characteristic instances occur to me: A spruce young gentleman and party of friends, in crossing a ferry, had only one boatman, nearly eighty years old, tugging away at both oars. The young spark, who rather piqued himself upon his performance, offered to relieve him of one. "Na, na," says old Donald, whose manner was the extreme of respect, "ye'll no be accustomed to this wark." "Me!" says the youngster, "I'll row any man in your country." The Highlander instantly faced him with a look and tone of perfect equality,—"I've seen the day when ye wad hae been sair pushed!" The other case was that of an old "grannie" in defence of her rights and privileges: An efficient and benevolent magistrate, who had been very active in his endeavours to stop the progress of the cholera, was inculcating the necessity of cleanliness. Grannie listened with a sort of half-consenting air, which seemed to say—"we must submit to all this for the good that's to come"—until he mentioned the necessity of removing the dunghill from before the window. Her Highland blood could not endure so audacious an inroad upon her freedom: she determined to make a stand upon this odoriferous ground, proverbial for inspiring even the craven with pluck. With an attitude of defiance, and her fists firmly stuck in her sides, she bawled out—"'Deed, Major, ye may tak our *lives*, but ye'll no tak our *middens*!!"

for a couple of years on the banks of two sea-lochs, I had every opportunity (which I did not neglect) of practising the different kinds of fishing, and making myself master of the most propitious times of the tide for doing so with success.

TROLLING FOR SEA-TROUT

May be ranked at the head of this fishing; but, before attempting to describe it, I shall mention two curious facts relative to the sea-trout and salmon, which it is difficult to account for. One is, that the former will take greedily in one loch, while you may troll a whole day in its next neighbour, though full of them, without getting a single bite. This was precisely the case in the two lochs alluded to. The other, that although you may see the huge tails and back-fins of salmon rising all round, I never knew of one taking the bait; and during the whole of my trolling in the salt water, I have only killed one grilse. This is the more strange, as the salmon is not at all shy of the spinning-bait in the fresh-water loch. A fishing friend once remarked to me, "You are all wrong about salmon not taking a bait in salt water. I had one on for a long time, hooked in the sea." Shortly afterwards I landed, in the Gareloch, a sea-trout of seven pounds, and sent it to him. In course of post I had a note thanking me for the fine clean salmon! My

reply was—"My dear Sheriff, never say you know a salmon *in* the water, when you don't know one *out of it!*"

The best time to begin fishing for sea-trout is at the turn of the tide, when it begins to ebb. The same rod and tackle as when trolling from a boat in fresh water will do. The herring-fry, salted, are the most killing bait (also excellent for large fish in fresh-water lochs), although minnows are very good: a sand-eel may also do, the black skin pulled over the head, so as to show nothing but the white body; this shines very bright, but, as it does not spin, is far less enticing than the others. A boatman who thoroughly knows the fishing-ground is indispensable, as it is much more difficult to find out than in the fresh water. Strong eddies, formed by the tide, are often good places; also any bays, especially if mountain burns run into them. The largest size of sea-trout are caught in this way; and when hooked, from the depth and *strength* of the water, make capital play. Large lythe, also, are frequently taken: these are like passionate boxers—fight furiously for a short time, after which they are quite helpless.

If there is a good pool at the mouth of any mountain burn, by going with your fly-rod during a "spate," or coming down of the water after heavy rain, *and when the tide is at the full*, you may have excellent sport. The trout are all floundering about, ready to take your fly the moment it touches the water. This

only lasts for a short time, as they all leave the pool at the receding of the tide. I say nothing of sea-trout or salmon flies, which vary so much in the different lochs, rivers, and streams, that every angler should be able to dress them for himself. Any fishing-tackle maker will be happy to teach him *for a consideration.* He has then only to learn from an approved local hand what flies are best for the loch or stream he intends to fish, and tie them accordingly.

THE LONG-LINE.

The eel-line, already noticed, is precisely the long-line in miniature, with the exception of the hooks, which are such coarse, blunt-looking weapons, that the wonder is how they catch at all. They are sold for a mere trifle at any of the shops in the seaport towns, and tied on with a wax-end, but sometimes only with a knot of the twine itself: a turn of the wire on the shank enables you to do this. A baiting-basket is required—one end for the line, the other for the baited hooks, which are placed in regular rows. My line had only three hundred hooks, but some have double that number. Herring, cut into small pieces, are the best bait: I required about a dozen for one setting, provided I eked out with mussels; but eighteen or twenty were necessary if the line was baited exclusively with herring. Mussels, however, drop off the

hook so easily, that when herring can be procured they are seldom used. Seeing the long-line baited, set, and drawn, will thoroughly teach any one who has an idea of fishing—*writing* how to do so never will. It generally took me about an hour and a half to bait mine; so I taught a boy, who, after two or three lessons, could bait as well as myself.

The best time to set the long-line is after low water, when the tide has flowed a little, and brought the fish with it. To know the different "hauls"[1] is most important, as your success in a great measure depends upon the selection of a good one. After the line is set, *it should be left exactly one hour;* and, if you have hit upon a shoal, you will most likely half fill the boat. I have several times killed about a dozen from twenty to thirty pounds weight, besides quantities of smaller. The fish for the most part taken are cod, ling, haddock, skate, large flounders, and enormous conger-eels, some of the latter more than half the length of your boat, and nearly as thick as a man's leg. These would generally be thrown back again, were it not for the havoc they make among the other fish, and the damage they do to the set-lines. Their throats are therefore cut as soon as they are pulled up, after which operation they will live for hours. The skate is also very tenacious of life; and nothing can be more absurd than the grotesque pompous faces it will continue to exhibit for some time after being

[1] Banks, and parts of the loch, where the shoals of fish congregate.

deposited in the boat. The round shape of its jagged crown is exactly like a judge's wig; and when it puffs out its cheeks, the whole face and head so forcibly remind one of those learned lords, that you almost fancy you hear it pronouncing sentence upon the devoted congers. The conger, if dressed like other fish, is uneatable; but when the oil is taken out by parboiling, some people prefer it to cod. Care should be taken to untwist the line as much as possible when drawing it, which saves a deal of trouble afterwards. There is generally so much filth and discomfort in the whole business, that gentlemen seldom care to engage in it, except a few times from curiosity.[1]

THE HAND-LINE.

When a boy, I used to be much delighted with the hand-line, and never failed to practise it as opportunity offered. It is simply a piece of whalebone fastened crosswise to the line, and a hook at each end,

[1] Thunder is generally believed to be destructive to fishing of all kinds—and so it often is. I, however, know an instance, when a friend of mine set his long-line just before a tremendous storm, which raged the whole hour it was in the water. As soon as it cleared, he rowed to his line, with no hope of success for that day: to his astonishment it was perfectly loaded with heavy fish. Something similar happened to myself, when going to fish the Almond, near Edinburgh. I was overtaken by a thunderstorm when close to the river: directly upon its subsiding, I commenced fishing, and at the second or third throw hooked a fine trout. After a few hours I returned home, having had excellent sport.

tied upon strong gut, with a heavy lead in the centre. This lead sinks the line rapidly to the bottom, which it no sooner touches than you feel it strike. You are thus enabled to keep moving the hooks a yard or two up, and then sink them to the ground again, which entices the fish. All the art of the hand-line is to pull up *the instant* you feel a bite, and never to slacken (unless to play a large one) till the fish is safe in the boat. Keep changing your ground, and dropping your anchor, unless the fish seem taking. Mussels are the best bait; and it is a good plan to throw a few into the water, as well as the empty shells.

Hand-line fishing may be followed at any time, but it is best at the flow of the tide. As the water retires, shift your position further down the loch, and *vice versâ*. Almost every cottage on the banks can supply a hand-line, and every inmate knows how to use it.

THE WHITE FEATHER.

To some *highly facetious* authors, a pun upon the white feather might prove a prize, so I shall make them a present of it instead of my readers, and proceed to its dressing and use. Of all apologies for a fly, this is the clumsiest; it is only a swan's or goose's feather tied round a large and very coarse bait-hook, without the least pretence to art; any man who had never dressed a fly in his life would be as successful

in the attempt as the most finished performer.[1] The rod and line are in perfect keeping with the fly; a bamboo-cane, or young hazel-tree, with ten or twelve yards of oiled cord, and a length or two of double or triple gut next the hook: no reel is used.

The fish generally caught in this way are lythe and seithe, although mackerel will rise freely also: when fishing for the former, good double gut may be strong enough, but if large fish are expected, I should always recommend triple. Seithe take best in the morning and evening, and a slight breeze is rather an advantage: although the fly is sometimes sunk a little with lead, it is more often fished with at the top. You may begin at any state of the tide, and row over all the sunk banks and places where the fish frequent, at a slow rate, with three or four rods placed regularly in the stern of the boat. When a small seithe is hooked, pull it in at once, and out with the rod again as fast as possible: sometimes nearly all the rods have a fish at the same time. In lythe-fishing you need

[1] Worsted is occasionally used instead of the feather, and it is sometimes a killing way to have a different colour for *each* rod—viz., white for one, yellow for another, and red for a third. This last is best for mackerel; and in some states of the water and sky, both lythe and seithe, especially the former, prefer the yellow to the white. It is a curious fact regarding the seithe, that when it grows old it changes both its nature and appearance: the colour is nearly black instead of the rich green; it grows to a great size, and gains a formidable set of teeth. It is then called a "stanlock," or "black salmon," and is quite as destructive to other fish as the conger-eel. In this stage it is never known to rise to the fly, but it is occasionally taken by the hand or long-line.

not launch your boat till low water: sink the fly with a couple of buck-shot, and troll on the brow, where it descends perpendicularly; this is easily seen at that state of the tide. When you hook a large fish, try to prevent it getting down, or you may be obliged to throw the rod overboard, in case the lythe should break away; but if you can manage to swing it about at the top for a short time, it will soon be unable to offer any resistance.

Trolling with the white feather has this recommendation, that it may be enjoyed by an invalid or party of ladies; and certainly a more delightful way of spending the cool of a summer evening cannot be imagined—rowing slowly along those romantic shores, hearing the distant gurgle of the dwindled mountain brook in its steep descent, and ever and anon passing the blue curling smoke of a shepherd's or fisherman's grass-topped hut upon the banks.

SEA-LOCH FISHING.

When rivers are dwindled to a thread, and the fish of the fresh-water lochs have become lethargic from the fierce heat of the "dog-days," rejecting the most tempting lures, the sea-loch is in perfection. The spears are then sharpened, the hand-lines overhauled, and the red and white feather flies laid out for use. I am sorry to say that the long-line, a great favourite

of mine in "days of yore," is now scarcely worth the trouble of setting, except in winter. Forty years ago my summer hauls in Loch Long comprised cod, ling, skate, gurnet, haddock, with many other additions; but for many years that loch has been nearly deserted. A few occasional fish have of late, however, been again attracted to the head of the loch by the tempting refuse of the Clyde having been there deposited.

On our coming first to the shores of Loch Fyne, the long-line was given a trial; but, after several settings, the few small rock-cod and haddocks that took the baits were nearly devoured by dog-fish before reaching the surface. These apologies for sharks continued their attacks even to the side of the boat, and a mangled remnant (sometimes only a head) was found adhering to the bait-hooks. The deep-sea fishing was therefore voted useless, except by hand-lines. The shallows, however, yield abundant amusement with the spear. The surface-feeders are of course lured by flies, white, red, or yellow, according to their mood. Of these methods of fishing the spear is certainly the most exciting, requiring the three qualities needful for excelling in all outdoor sports—viz., a quick eye, a steady hand, and a cool head.

Except by a keen eye, few flat-fish (the exact colour of the sand or mud on which they rest) will be discovered. If the hand is not true, they will be missed when seen, especially in six feet of water.

Without good nerves, and their accompaniment, self-command, a man will be in such a flurry at sight of a fine fish, as often to be unfitted either to manage his skiff or to give proper directions to an assistant. There are as few good "spearsmen" as of those who excel in other sports; but any one having a tolerable hand and eye, with pretty strong nerves, may, *by practice*, become a good and successful "hand." Any one trying this amusement, I am persuaded, will either, *on failure*, give it up in disgust, or become an enthusiast. I have known my young friends on the moor, in the middle of grouse well scattered for evening shooting, rush down to the boats without a pang when they saw the loch near Otter Ferry in shining order. On coming home at night with a heavy grouse-bag, thirty to forty ground-fish were laid out in the hall, and the idea ridiculed that the amusement of the gun could equal that of the spear!

There are, however, comparatively very few days in a season when spearing is even practicable—far fewer when it is at its best. A slight ripple mars the sport, while it is ruined by a moderate breeze.

Under a cloudless sky and burning sun, with our best "hand" alone in his tiny skiff, it would be a strange exception if he reached the shore without a basket of choice fish. To give an ordinary day's specimen, the bag for one Saturday in 1865 was a dozen flounders and two plaice, respectively four and a half and five pounds weight. On that day the

spearing lasted only from ten till one o'clock, when a stiff breeze sprang up, and of course the fishing ceased. The same expert "spear" has often landed from twenty to thirty flounders in a forenoon, several of them two or three pounds in weight. Large skate are sometimes detected basking on the deeper banks; but the spearsmen had to humour these powerful fellows, by allowing them to drag the coble until tired, when they floated quietly to the side of the boat, submitting to their fate.

Surface-fishing for "cuddies," as young seithe are called on the west coast (called "podlies" in the Firth of Forth), requires neither art nor science; but the associations are pleasant, for the sport is generally followed on a golden evening after a day of intense heat. The loch and its girdle of purple hills are then seen in the glow of their full beauty. Rowing from shore to shore, and along the banks fringed with green copses, there is continual change in the sunset lights and shadows. Then, again, the bow of the boat is turned to the shallows of the mid-loch near the Otter, where the busy throng is rising. The sun falls below the western hill, and the sport of the evening begins.

Five or six rods, with line and tackle strong enough to pull in a two or three pounder, are required; for though seithe above one pound are seldom hooked, there are larger fish, such as lythe or cod, which often rise keenly to the "cuddie fly." Seithe are a poor watery fish for the table, but lythe of a

large size are much in request. We seldom took them above a pound in Loch Fyne, but I have captured some of seven or eight pounds in the "olden time" on Loch Long. In the Gareloch, too, when trolling for sea-trout, large lythe took my minnow or garvie constantly, giving good sport for a short time, but they never had the pluck or endurance of a sea-trout of equal size. In those days I always liked to fish both Loch Long and the Gareloch with a reel; but this caution is little needed on Loch Fyne.

We made a curious discovery last autumn (1877)—viz., that seithe frequent fresh water. When trouting in Arrochar Burn, my son caught eighteen "cuddies" nearly 100 yards from the sea. The most experienced Loch Fyne fishermen would not believe it until they saw his basket. They were taken with brandling worm. As a set-off against seithe-poaching in fresh water, some of the finest fresh-water eels I ever tasted were speared by my sons in the salt water of Loch Long.

Several years ago a Thames fisherman offered to take the eel-fishing of Loch Lomond for a good rent from my late brother. Though assured that he would make nothing of it, the man of enterprise stood to his proposal, and at the time of the yearly eel migration set his eel-pots in the Leven, the effluent of the loch. He was so well repaid that he was anxious to renew his lease, sending an enormous specimen as a proof of his success to Rossdhu. From his experi-

ence of the Thames, the eel-merchant knew well that the only road to the sea for the migrating fish was by the river Leven, and that he could secure them on their seaward voyage.

In my early days the loch was full of flounders, some of large size. They, too, leave the fresh for salt water at certain times; but since the pollution of the Leven by turkey-red dyers, the flounders disappeared, refusing to return by such an unsavoury route. Although char are to be found in most of the western lochs, there are none in Loch Lomond.

I mentioned before that when seithe grow old their nature is completely changed. They gain a formidable case of teeth, and are as fierce cannibals as any that infest those sea-lochs. When the white cloud of gulls, &c., come screaming and hovering over the herring-shoal, it is pretty certain that the dreaded "stanlocks," or "black salmon," as they are called, hang on the rear. Some of these monsters even attain the great weight of sixty or seventy pounds. The herring-fishers, by means of a hand-line of stout whipcord and enormous hooks baited with herring, catch them often of that size. Unlike their silvery namesake, I make bold to say that a "black salmon kipper" would have little temptation to detain magistrates at breakfast when royalty arrives, to the prejudice of the city keys.

Good sport may sometimes be had with the smaller "stanlocks" by baiting with a piece of pork or small

herring and trolling the ground they are known to haunt. The larger ones, however, refuse to come so near the surface, and only fish varying from six to fifteen pounds are taken by the troll. With a reel and line of oiled cord, a black salmon makes a run almost as exciting as a white one of the same weight.

Seithe swim in greater or smaller "skulls;" so, in going over a fleet of them, they are pulled into the boat as fast as the rods can be taken up. Of course the continuance of the "rises" depends on the size of shoal. The same sort of night being as good for the hand-line as the "cuddie fishing," we generally preferred the former; but the last time we tried seithe nearly one hundred were brought into the boat, a dozen lythe, two rock-cod, and a mackerel.

Without giving an opinion on the vexed question of "trawling," let me say that I have listened to both sides of the argument ably stated by keen partisans. There is no doubt that all fish have decreased in the western sea-lochs since trawling has been legalised. Many proprietors of salmon and sea-trout streams which run into these lochs attribute also the falling off of their fisheries to the same cause. This last charge does not appear so clearly made out, as salmon and sea-trout never spawn in the sea, and there is reason enough for a decrease in these fish from the immense addition of network for salmon all round our coasts. The same may be said of the herring-fishery, as the great accession lately of drift-nets alone would

account for a lessening in the herring-shoals, without taking note of the mischief done by the trawl.

Before trawl-nets were sanctioned by law, I have seen herring-fishers in the Kyles of Bute filling their boats to the gunwale by this means. Their companions, who were drying their nets on the shore, only laughed when I asked if they would like a free berth in the jail of Inverary. Of course, when the restriction was taken off the trawl-net, no fair fishing had a chance against it.

It often happens that whole boatloads of herring, unable to find conveyances to a market, are cast into the sea, to decay and spoil the fishing-ground. Others are caught quite unfit for use. These last feed as foully as cod, and when taken will not keep more than a few hours, though well salted. They are often netted in immense numbers, but of course are unsaleable. They are honoured by the title of "gut pokes" by the fishermen. This distinguished epithet arises from their being provided with a bag which contains their food. When they cast the "poke" or bag, they improve in quality, but are not equal for a long time to those that "feed on the sea," as fishermen say. It is a curious fact that both sea-salmon, which are always in the finest order, and herring in the best condition, never have food in their inside.

In the Sound of Mull my son killed eighty "gut poke" herring in one evening with the white feather fly, and they took it with even a keener zest than the

"cuddies" in their best mood. The "skull" of very large and fat herring in Loch Fyne are not thought so good, either fresh or salted, as those of a medium size.

Deep fishing in the sea-lochs has the advantage over the shallows, that there is a chance of greater variety and better quality in the basket. But, although different specimens of choice white fish may be taken at the same anchorage, particular kinds have their favourite banks on which they generally seek their food.

Near Balliemore House, my summer home in 1866, there was a bank for whiting, another for sea-perch, and a third for grey cod, besides several banks for "goldies," as they are called by fishermen. In good weather, on their particular banks, numbers of their own special kind of fish may be caught. Round Otter Ferry summer cod are sometimes brought up by hand-line, of pretty good weight; while the winter ones, both in Loch Fyne and Loch Goil, are even now of large size. In old times, the "whiting bank" half a mile below the boathouse was very valuable water. Every warm summer evening heavy creelfuls of the largest size of whiting were brought home, besides a good many cod from three to five pounds in weight. In those days any boat having ordinary success would in a few hours, with hand-lines, land enough fish to last a family for a week. Those times are long gone by, and a party of the same number would think themselves well repaid for their evening's work with

four or five dozen fish. Our takes during the three years we rented Balliemore were thought very good for these degenerate days, the creel holding sometimes eighty, seldom less than fifty, white fish, in one small boat with two hand-lines. When, however, our two boats, moored to the same anchor, fished in company, the success was fully a third greater; and had they been independent, it would of course, in all likelihood, have been doubled.

The chief qualities for a hand-line are a fine touch and ready hand. When one of the boats is *manned* by ladies, and the other by men, both crews equally used to this line, it is generally found that the ladies beat their rivals both in numbers and weight of fish. This, no doubt, arises from their fingers being keener to feel, and quicker to strike, the least nibble at the bait. When a light wind arises, the difficulty of noticing the touch of a small bite is much increased; but during a fresh breeze nothing but the sharp tug of a pretty large one is at all likely to be felt.

The loneliness of one of these evenings, in its setting of matchless colouring in sky and sea and shore, united to a dash of savage life, has a witchery all its own.

As you row down to the banks, a fleet of "herring skows" appear riding at anchor. The fishermen have landed, and are gathered in picturesque groups on the rocks, listening to one of their number perched above his fellows reading a crumpled newspaper of ancient date. Suddenly there is a Gaelic shout, and a rush

to the boats, which are manned as if by magic. Away rows the fleet, a "look-out" man leaning against the mast, the creaking oars making for a distant movement of the waters. That well-known ruffle on the sea announces the welcome tidings—the herring-shoal is in sight!

On other nights, when a stiff breeze swells the canvas, and the craft flashes past with crowded sails, managed and steered with consummate skill by their pirate-looking crews, they always recall to me Byron's lines, addressed to larger ships, but not to more daring or truer seamen.

The hand-line, like white-feather fishing, is seldom good before sunset. As soon as the glare is off the glittering sea the fish begin to bite freely, and the tugs at the bait increase as twilight deepens, until it becomes too dark for the lure to be seen. In July good sport seldom begins before seven, and lasts till about half-past nine o'clock.

There is, however, much to interest the naturalist and terrify the novice (!) before it is time to put down the lines. The distant roaring and thumping behind that promontory are caused by a troop of porpoises. The larger are called "buckers," which snort and tumble in the water; the "pellochs," or smaller ones, spring several feet into the air, coming down with a thud on the sea which sounds like a blow from a sledge-hammer. Gradually they come round into sight, and swim nearer and nearer, continuing their

gambols. The sea round them is "churned with white foam," and the "green hands" of our boats look uneasily to the shore. Before coming very close they sheer off for a distant bay. Our tyros, however, have scarcely congratulated themselves on their escape, when a detached couple of awful monsters, the size of Smithfield oxen, rise within twenty yards of our tiny vessel, and, giving ample proof of their bulk and strength, vanish again into the deep with a terrific grunt. In spite of the laughter of their associates, the novices steal many a furtive glance over the gunwale, lest these leviathans should reappear, and either upset the little skiff or tear it to the bottom.

The arctic whales of the Sound of Mull are often dangerous, but the smaller species that venture into the inland sea-lochs, called "black fish," are harmless, except when male and female are swimming in company. The male has then been known to attack boats. An experienced fisherman, who has fished Loch Fyne for forty years, told me that he was once anchored on the north side of the loch when a whale rose close to his starboard bow. This did not much annoy him, till another appeared about the same distance from the stern. Thus placed between Scylla and Charybdis, there was nothing for it but to wait patiently for the onslaught. To his great relief, however, first one sank, then the other, when he made for land at racing speed.

This same observant fisherman told us on our

arrival at Balliemore that flat-fish spearing ended in October, as they all left the shallow for deep water. When October came, our best spearer brought home creels nearly as full as those in July. His keen eye soon saw that, instead of leaving the ground, the flounders only buried themselves in the mud except the head and eyes; so it only needed a sharper look-out on a very clear day to insure success. The old man was thoroughly amazed when the spearing never fell off all winter. The 1st of January being very bright and frosty, the holiday board was graced by sixteen savoury flounders of large size, taken only a few hours before.

There was an excellent take of herring one night (July 29, 1862), but, although the farmer before whose ground the shoal appeared offered the highest price, he could not induce the fishers to part with a single herring. They were all forwarded to the "coupers," to be salted for sale in the Greenock or Glasgow markets. The fishermen are afraid to offend these salesmen by parting with ever so small a quantity on their own account.

Two boats, headed by the Otter blacksmith, netted at the same time five hundred mackerel, which were also sent away by an express row-boat next morning.

Our own "catch" with two hand-lines was eighty white fish.

A few years ago there was a natural oyster-bed on the Otter Point, and in the bay at Balliemore. It has

been nearly harried, however, I am sorry to say, by fishermen and others landing in boats from the opposite side, and carrying off the dainty molluscs in wholesale quantities. Nevertheless, at low tides, they are still scattered along the shores in considerable numbers. Our party often made raids on them, returning with sometimes ten or eleven to fifteen dozen of this residue. They were hidden in a sheltered creek, and to this depot we were indebted for many an oyster supper.

From the lack of resting rocks, but few seals are tempted to penetrate upper Loch Fyne. Their only regular haunt is at Minard Bay, about eight miles higher up the loch. The rocks exposed there at low tide give a good station for basking in the sun, according to their wont. They can then be approached easily with a rifle. Several of them have been shot there—one by a boy, the son of the proprietor of Minard. A very old male sometimes pays a visit to the bay at Balliemore, but his appearance is so rare and uncertain, and the coast so shallow, that it would be mere waste of time to watch his motions.

This same seal caused an amusing mistake on a certain New Year's Night not a hundred years ago. Two sportsmen were shooting woodcock and ground-game amongst the furze bushes on the heights of Balliemore. They were tempted to prolong their sport till it was almost dark, when one returned by the high ground in order to leave the dogs at the

kennel, while the other, followed by a gillie carrying the game, chose the path by the shore. In the bay close to the house a most unearthly screaming arose to the wintry sky. The gillie assured his principal that he well knew the voice of the seal, and that he was now at his mercy. As it was by this time quite dark, with no moon in the heavens, the struggling, howling object was easily stalked, and at last detected on the smooth water. The gun was levelled, the report rang through the darkness, and when the glare of the flash had passed away, a creature of some sort was discerned floundering in the sea. As neither master nor gillie felt tempted to approach it, they ran to the house for a lantern. But at this crisis dark hints were thrown out concerning a certain functionary who had been keeping his holiday along the shore. Could he be the poor victim? With this uncomfortable suspicion in his mind, the shooter walked down with the lantern party, who were also joined by his afternoon's companion. On wading to their prey, instead of a dead man or dead seal, lay extended a fine specimen of a male heron!

This story suggests another, told by Scroop, of the witch killed by silver shot while riding through the air to the cairn on the top of Ben-y-Gloe. No one dared to go near the spot till morning light, when lying dead on the top of the cairn was found the body of a large blue heron.

A sea-loch, surrounded as it is by so much animal

life on wave and "wind grieved" shore, is always a source of great interest to any one who cares for natural history. It is also of much advantage to every true sportsman when it bounds his shooting-quarters, as so often happens in the Western Highlands.

THE SCRINGE-NET.

All netting is poaching, not sporting: but this record of sea-loch fishing would not be complete without some notice of the scringe-net—perhaps the most picturesque among them all. The wild effect is heightened by its being only practised after nightfall, when advantage is always taken of quiet weather and an untroubled sea. My fishings in the Sound of Mull comprised two large bays—viz., Garmony and Scalastal, each having its complement of "shots" or clear places where the net can be dragged. At the turn of the tides, once a-month, the sea-trout rush up the sound in great numbers. Garmony Bay, the farthest, being best fished at high water, or, as they say, with a full tide, and Scalastal at half-tide, there is always time to reach the latter at the most propitious moment, after scringing Garmony.

It was on a September evening, when the harvest moon rose queen-like from a bank of clouds, that we left the snug tea-table for Scalastal Bay, distant only a few hundred yards from the house. In crossing the

little grass field which skirts the shore, knots of moor-plover were picking up the night-worms brought out by the heavy dew. They showed no alarm, although by the moonlight we distinctly saw them within a few yards, and heard their low murmur of content at the plentiful supply. The scream of the heron, disturbed from her night-feed by the fishermen, warned us that they were already shipping the net preparatory to a haul. A group of goblin figures on the beach were presided over by my manager, Sandy, who was summarily sending two farm lads home to their beds, as a punishment for keeping late hours in the morning. "Ou ay, plenty mens withoot them," says the old weaver, who always makes sure work of plural; thus deer are "deers," sheep "sheeps," &c. The yellow cheeks and meagre form of "Shemish Weaver" are strong enough warrant for his sedentary life. Who, therefore, could guess that this dried mummy was as hardy on the hills as a Highland stot; or that, in the coldest scringing-night, he was equally independent of salt water as a sea-otter?

In solitary dry-shod dignity, Sandy holds the rope on the shore, while the weaver carelessly pays it out of the boat with his left hand; with his right he directs the boatman, flourishing a huge pinch of snuff, with which he fortifies himself before beginning to toss out the net. Having been used to it from a boy, I rather plume myself on net-setting, but fairly succumb to old Shemish, whose smooth delivery and

perfect semicircle of draught I always admire. In the present instance, from anxiety to cover the whole burn-mouth, he had miscalculated distance, and the last boat-rope did not reach the land. A few Gaelic grunts from the weaver, when Tom the shepherd, a fine young fellow of six feet two, with legs like stilts, jumps over the boat-side, nearly up to his armpits in water, and by a few sharp jerks gains rope-way enough to reach the shore. There was plenty strength at each rope-end, albeit some soft hands rather retarded than helped the drag. The corks come bobbing merrily in, as the circle narrows. "There's big fish in the net!" shouts Tom; "I see'd them brek." "Keep yer hands low, wull ye, and pull up the leeds," growls Sandy. "Be cashus, be cashus," shrieks Shemish, his apathy completely gone; "the net's full o' them." By a rapid smooth pull the bosom of the net is safely grounded, full of large and small fish, splashing, rattling, and flashing phosphoric light. Besides rock-cod, skate, flounders, and other salt-water fish, there were eighteen sea-trout, some of them four pounds weight. Three more hauls were taken, but less successful. There were, however, from eight to a dozen sea-trout in each. This was only an average night. A week earlier, no less than sixty trout were landed in Garmony Bay at one draught. No salmon were taken the whole season.

I seldom cared to join this sport myself, but my boys shared both its fatigues and pleasures every time

the net was out. Often, as the season advanced, the nights growing darker and the winds higher, we watched for their return till two or three in the morning, and could not forget that on those wild seas and crossing tides many a boat has been watched for that returned no more.

I have now, I think, given all the *necessary* instructions in fresh-water and sea-loch fishing; and feel confident that, by following them, the admirer of "flood and fell," even if a beginner in angling, may return from his fishing tour, having as often filled his creel from their depths as gratified his taste with their scenery.

A RAID ON SUTHERLAND.

THERE are yet some blue spots in the darkening horizon of old Scotia's fishing sport, and the county of Sutherland still holds its own in the variety of its angling capabilities. By the permission and kind assistance of the late Duke of Sutherland, I enjoyed the luxury of exploring these romantic wilds, and found the excitement of success in good keeping with the scenes which so often afford it.

I was fresh from an English school when I first saw Sutherland; but what changes have these intervening years wrought on this remote and primitive land! So far as I remember there were then no white-faced sheep, and the moors and mountains were grazed by the old-fashioned black-faces, interspersed with groups of "black cattle," the picturesque hirsel of the glens.

The savage precipices had tenfold interest as the constant haunts of golden eagles or peregrine falcons,

while most of the sea-cliffs or lonely mountain-tarns were associated with eyries of the erne or the osprey.

The rank and luxuriant heather had not then been consumed to accommodate the vast flocks of Cheviots; the grouse were regularly distributed and healthy; while old deer with noble heads were far more common than in these modern days of cost and preservation, when numbers are made to atone for lack of size and high bearing.

The so-called vermin have disappeared, and no wonder. Like Indian scalps, a bribe was paid down by the shooting tenants for the head of each winged or footed creature of prey; and as this blood-money graduated in value from the nobler to the meaner birds or animals, of course the skill and cupidity of the keepers were chiefly directed to those magnificent specimens long ago driven to remote Highland tracts, but now in a fair way of being extirpated altogether.

The "iron road" ended at Bonar Bridge, on the confines of Sutherland, when I last visited that country; so in order to penetrate the lonesome straths and mountain-roads of this sheep and deer grazed province, my son and I hired a neat little waggonette from Ardgay.

After baiting at Lairg, the first day's drive brought us to Altnaharrow at half-past seven in the evening. The inn was exactly in the same state of cleanliness, order, and comfort as on my last visit; and my old

acquaintance, Harry Munro, the landlord, as civil and obliging as ever.

A course of fine weather had dried up the streams, but as there was some dead water at the foot of the feeding-burn of Loch Naver, my son borrowed Harry's nondescript rod to try for any stray loch-trout that might be feeding in this estuary, in defiance of the remonstrances of Harry's farm man, who insisted that the "flees were ower sma'." The fisher, however, selected three to suit his own fancy, and by half-past nine landed twenty loch-trout—amply sufficient for a supper that night, for a remove before the excellent roast beef of our next day (Sunday) dinner, and for an adjunct to Monday's breakfast before leaving for Durness. When our trap was packing, Harry quietly stepped up to me and asked, "What flees the young gentleman fished wi', as he had never seen so mony troots ta'en oot o' that bit water before."

Our driver, besides being a very intelligent lad, had been employed in various capacities all over the county. With great precision he pointed out the marches, described the shooting-beats and their tenants, knew the different proprietors, as well as the names of most of the hill-lochs or mountain-streams. From constant yearly report of the different shooting and fishing bags, he had also formed a pretty shrewd guess of the sporting capabilities of the land and water we skirted, as well as of the sporting skill of those who rented it. This forenoon he was more

than usually demonstrative at a fox's cairn close to the road. A few years back he had been a hind on this farm, and had assisted at the night-watches for reynard among these rocks, which, he assured us, were catacombed for a hundred yards along the mountain-face. A short distance before, he pointed out a precipice where his master the farmer ("who had ower muckle whusky") had been pitched over with his gig. The horse and gig were dashed to pieces, but the farmer was miraculously thrown forward on a green mound, and escaped with a slight bruise.

The bold rocks about half-way between Durness and "the Cape" (Wrath) had attracted us to this wild coast. They are the favoured resort of myriads of sea-birds, including the white-tailed eagle. "If ye had been here last week it wad hae been grand," said the weather-beaten coastman; "but we daurna ventur in this easterly swell."

The cold dull "haar" seemed fairly set in, as there was no change in the night, so we drove down a distance of twenty miles to Scourie, where the island of Handa, with its beetling cliffs, attracts the same description of sea-fowl as the rocks below Durness.

Although the swell on the outward and exposed rocks of Handa would prevent our skirting them unless the wind changed, still the old fisherman, Macleod, assured us that the sheltered creek and bays between Handa and the mainland often attracted curious sea-birds. The old man was familiar with the commoner

sorts, had sometimes noticed stormy-petrels there, and casually mentioned what he called "sea-pigeons." We at first thought he meant rock-doves; but the bird he meant had red feet, *a red bill*, and dived. Its colour also was black, with a white patch on the wing. The black guillemot, thought I; but then the red bill. "Are you sure of the colour of the bill?" He passed his word that it was bright as vermilion.

To secure this red-bill I eagerly ordered his boat to be ready at nine next morning. "What can that bird be?" I said so often during the evening, that my son compared my curiosity to that of the old Caithness laird, who never could rest without knowing everything about everybody. When travelling north with a friend, he stayed the night at a small inn. "Ye'll be frae Caithness?" says he to the maid-of-all-work. "No," rather curtly. "Frae Sutherland, then?" "No," a little sulkily. "Ou, I hae't; ye're frae Ross-shire?" "No," still. "Ye maun be frae the Mearns, then?" The "No" was nearly smothered by the slamming of the door. All the evening the laird was thoughtful and abstracted, and when he took his candle to go to bed, made the earnest appeal to his companion—"Whaur can that lassie be frae?"

Macleod honestly told us that the sea-eagle had not built on Handa last season, nor this, so far as he knew. He gave their correct titles to the common guillemots, razor-bills, puffins, cormorants green and black, &c., and was only a little confused about the

gulls. What, then, could this sea-pigeon be? If I could only get him to give way on the carnation beak —but catch him!

The breeze had lulled, but it was still from the east. The two boatmen, therefore, were yet unable to say whether we could round the outer rocks of Handa until they cleared the farthest mainland cape. They then began to shake their heads, — "There was ower great a swell to gang within shot o' the cliffs, but we might try the land-locked creek and bays first, an' maybe it wad moderate by the evenin'." The calm water, too, was best for "sea-pigeons" and stormy-petrels.

With slow pull the men crept along the coast, while, on rounding each peak into a fresh bay, Macleod protested he had never "gaen ower sae muckle water" without spying the mysterious red-bill. At length my son asked for the telescope, and on returning it carelessly remarked, "There are a couple of black guillemots." Macleod was alive in a moment—"That's the sea-pigeon." To satisfy him we rowed towards the birds. One rose out of reach, and the other (a very distant shot) was dropped by the No. 4, its bill, to our boatman's chagrin, black as ebony! Unlike many of his superiors in birth and culture, this poor Highlander's radiant freak of fancy was, I am convinced, neither premeditated nor wilful.

As the surf, in place of abating, was coming in stronger, we gave up all hope of circling the island.

A landing on it was easily made, and we proceeded to the erne's rock. The alarm shot only brought out some rock-birds, but the eagle, as Macleod suspected, had forsaken her eyrie.[1] Within shot were tier on tier, and rank on rank, of razor-bills, guillemots, coulter-nebs, ranged like the defenders of a beleaguered fortress. The crest of one stack of detached rock rising abruptly from old ocean had never been trodden by human foot. Sunning themselves on this turf, a colony of great black-backed gulls lay, or rolled about, in heedless, conscious security. On the sides were thousands of cliff-birds so shockingly tame that I desired Macleod to pitch a few stones to try to enliven the dormant mass. At the second throw he killed one, which dropped into the yawning abyss, while only a few of its nearest neighbours deigned to leave their perch. On looking into the awful chasm, we distinctly perceived the large green single egg on several of the ledges, but only one *pair* of eggs, and these were half the size of the others, and whitish-coloured.

As we already possessed all the specimens we noticed on and around Handa, the sail was soon hoisted for Scourie, and in the afternoon and evening a rugged drive through the mountains to Inchnadamff completed a thoroughly enjoyable day.

We had come to Tongue on Thursday, the sacra-

[1] I am happy, however, to record that the erne hatched and reared her young in the spring of 1877 on her Handa rock.

mental fast; and Friday being "the Men's day," Mr H., the superintendent, gave us a hint that perhaps the keeper might have some qualms about attending us to the lochs. In Caithness, Sutherland, Ross, and part of Inverness-shire, these nondescript beings called "the Men," constitute themselves judges of their ministers. When they set their baleful mark on any clergyman, the people refuse to attend his services. They seem a lingering remnant of Popery and superstition in the Highlands, having a separate department of their own, answering a little to some of the lay orders of monkish times. We must, however, do the old friars the justice to remember, that, ignorant though they were, they were rather in advance of their own day; while these authorities, even in this penny-reading age, have about as much general knowledge as they have divinity. On the death of George III., the leading "Man" of Caithness, when asked by his followers, "Fa was to be king noo?" oracularly answered, "Fa suld be king but oor ain Sir Shon!"[1] If old Ross, the keeper, felt disappointment at being deprived of the services of such sages, I certainly could not detect it in his paradoxical countenance, where mirth and seriousness seemed to struggle with doubtful result. To try him, we offered to witness "the Men's" performance ourselves. The right chord was touched; gravity conquered; and Ross, for all but the camlet, might have been a "Man" himself.

[1] The late Sir John Sinclair of Ulbster.

A few questions about the lochs, however, soon altered the case, and waggery prevailed again.

The tent was pitched in a secluded spot, beside a little brook among the hills. A large primitive congregation surrounded the young Highland minister, who, with violent gesture and defiant tone, was fiercely shouting a Gaelic exhortation. Before him sat "the Men," in full camlet canonicals. Only two had the cotton hood; the rest wore red or brown scratch-wigs, which so enhanced their natural or assumed gravity, as to be perfectly grotesque. They were considerably above middle age, though not very old. The most prominent was the best specimen. He concluded with a prayer in a low tone, and was really a prepossessing old man. His neighbour on the right was a truculent fellow, whose red swollen face too plainly intimated that neat whisky was the spirit that oftenest moved him; while he on the left, with a fiery-red wig and sharp-cut features, had that sinister expression of sly cunning, so especially repulsive, and most frequently found among the lower orders. They appeared to sit in judgment on the preacher; and you could almost read in their critical faces that they thought him "a fine lad, if he had experience." The women were mostly dressed in cloak, hood, and coif, which added to the simple effect of the whole; and when the nasal Gaelic psalm rose from the heathery brae, it was, barring "the Men," almost sublime. After the congregation broke up and the

three ministers descended from the tent, they, like good schoolboys, sheepishly shook hands with all their masters, "the Men," in turn.

None of the ministers under "the Men's" surveillance wear either gown or bands. Popish vestiges themselves, they call the gown and bands Popish in a minister, and are jealous, I suppose, of this infringement on the prerogative of camlet and scratch-wig! A northern presentee to a church took his revenge on going South, by mounting bands as a flag of triumph, and never doffing them till he reached the end of his journey at Dunkeld. Another less fortunate aspirant for bands supplied their place at the "trial" sermon, by pinning his Crimean medal outside his gown, to enlist the sympathy of his audience. That the bands had some mysterious power, a late Free Church professor fully proved, and fairly owned: for, when preaching in the Isle of May, seeing the lighthouse-keeper's wife completely overcome, he asked what part of the discourse had touched her feelings. "It's the baands, sir—it's the baands; I haena seen them sin' I was a lassie." Publish it not in the North—tell it not to "the Men"![1]

The morning broke out fine and clear after a thick mist. "The Men," amidst admiring groups, were

[1] Last summer (1879), when revisiting Sutherland, I made the acquaintance of a "Man" of the straitest sect of "the Men"—a very Pharisee of the Pharisees. His appreciation of character, however, in some respects would hardly coincide with his other narrow-minded views. For instance, in speaking of a certain highly born dame of

solemnly stalking to their homes in the distant straths or mountain-sides; and we, guided by Ross, wearing his merry face and a shooting-coat of portentous pouches, were wending our way to the lochs. The landlord at Altnaharrow had obligingly sent over a small coble, but the lochs were at their lowest, consequently very difficult to troll. There is only one state I consider worse—viz., when too large. You may then succeed with fly-trout and very small feroxes, but until the loch falls in considerably, the only ones worth hooking seem glued to the bottom.

Lochs Slam, Craggie, and Layghal are all connected by a pretty large moor-burn, so the salmo-ferox inhabits the three. It is very seldom any are taken in Loch Slam, and only now and then in Loch Craggie; while Loch Layghal, from its greater size, is their chosen home. Loch Slam, however, has the first run of the salmon after a flood of the Borgie, and for a day or two there is a fine chance of hooking one, but they soon find the burn flowing out of Loch Craggie, when they all penetrate into that loch. Unless, therefore, you are so fortunate as to hit on the shoal on their first rush up the river into the loch from the sea, you may not stir a fish. I had once the good

a past generation, he remarked, "Och, she was a godly leddy, the Countess; three-an'-twenty pints o' Glenlivat she gave to the gillies whan she cam' here, an' they were that pleased, they unyoked her horses an' drave the coach themsels!" Some of us perhaps might have preferred some other proof of the good Countess's piety.

hap to light on these fresh-run salmon, and rose three —fixing one, which (as I had only good trouting single gut, and dared not check him) twice ran out two-thirds of my 100 yards reel-line. The sight of him rolling on the top of the water at such long distance certainly tried the nerves! His strength failed after these boring bursts, and I soon had him under command of a short line, when he played beautifully. He was a lovely-shaped salmon of 11½ lb., with the sea-lice on him.

If the fly-trout are on the feed, Loch Slam always produces better-conditioned ones than the other two lochs—often from three-quarters to a pound weight. I have been told that since my last trip to Sutherland in 1875, a wire-netting has been fixed across the mouth of Loch Craggie burn, which will stop the salmon from penetrating into Lochs Craggie and Layghal, and by this means make Loch Slam a valuable fishing water.

The salmo-feroxes of these three lochs are scarcely equal to those of Loch Assynt at the other end of the county; while the Loch Shin trout taken by the troll are decidedly inferior to all these lochs—on which account I never took the trouble to fish it. The biggest ferox captured by us on Loch Layghal was secured by the worst-baited hook we ever insulted them with. Having used up all the best live bait, there only remained one or two small things quite unfit for trolling. I had landed at the Shepherd's

brook for a fresh supply, while my son put on a couple of these tiny trout with scarcely an attempt to make them spin. Very soon this large ferox dashed at the clumsy lure, and, after a wicked struggle, was persuaded into the landing-net, and proved a large-headed, ill-shaped monster of 14 lb. The next largest we landed was a perfect contrast to the above—viz., a beautiful specimen of 11½ lb., and in the finest order, on which account, my son, who caught him, had him preserved for our collection. On the other days when we trolled this loch, our bag generally contained from two to three feroxes, of from 5 to 8 lb.

One of the days we landed on the island; and I shall not easily forget it. A sky of unbroken sunshine was reflected in the calm bright loch; and the bracken, the harebell, and the wild hyacinth, growing in rank luxuriance, fragrant and beautiful, made the little islet look like a sparkling gem in its setting of silver. Warned by the colony of lesser black-backed gulls, the whole fleet of geese had sailed out from the island, and were riding at anchor about a mile off. There seemed upwards of a hundred, and with the telescope I plainly saw a good many goslings. Four of these bean-geese have been reared from the egg at the inn. Every morning they strutted past with drowsy cackle, pompously guarding their solitary gosling. They cracked and chewed oat-cake or biscuit voraciously. By getting plenty of food without the

trouble of seeking it, the enlarged power of digestion has so increased the size of their bodies that the wings are too weak to carry them. As Professor Lowe pithily says, they remain "captives without a chain."

Only one couple of the greater black-backed or giant gull haunted Loch Layghal. They were easily distinguished by their size and more sulky trumpet. This pair always met our boat half-way down the loch, but the lesser ones seldom noticed us unless we approached the islet. Ross's "boy," who attended us on that day, was a fine active young fellow of two-and-twenty, with a keen eye for a deer, or any other shy creature; and I may say for his father,[1] that it was quite refreshing to meet with a man who had taught himself so much of the practical part of natural history. His very errors are sharp ones; for instance, when we saw a common sandpiper, he told me they all passed the winter in flocks on the sea-shore. This mistake was very natural: he perceived that the summer snipes all left in winter, and also that the dunlins returned in larger trips at that season to the coast; he had therefore concluded that they were one and the same bird. We were both sorry to part with this kind old man. The last we saw of him was sitting

[1] Robert Ross died in the spring of 1876. On one of my last trips to Sutherland I called on him, when he pathetically said, "I wad like weel, Mr Colquhoun, to creep to the lochs and see you fish aince mair." His youngest brother John has always been my fishing guide since Robert was laid on the shelf, and a better could not have been found.

watching our skiff from a rock until a headland suddenly intercepted the view.

In walking up the steep brae near Loch Layghal, we were admiring the most natural scarecrow that ever defended a corn or potato field. It had two leaning staffs, a tattered hat, ragged coat and trousers, and a most imposing still-life attitude. "How natural!" I muttered to myself. Ross's ear was quick, "Oh, sir, you'd be astonished to see some of them here. They make them far more nat'ral than that." Scarcely was this unlucky assertion hazarded, when the scarecrow, which, like the Irish recruit, no doubt "stood up in the centre of its best wardrobe," began to walk. Ross looked extremely queer, and we moved quicker on. Upon a sandbank in the middle of Loch Layghal a solitary bird was resting. "What's that?" —"A gull, sir." "Are you sure?"—"Oh yes, it's one o' them gulls." I was fixing my telescope, when the gull spread wing, and proved herself—"An osprey," shouted I;—"An aigle," cries Ross in the same breath. These ornaments of the Highland lochs are now so rare, that Ross might well be excused for his careless look. Only a stray one at distant intervals appears on this loch, and the Duke has given strict orders to spare both them and the other eagles. Pity his Grace has so few imitators!

A rare type of *sui generis* was our amphibious coachman, Hector Gordon, of Altnaharrow. He thoroughly knew all the lochs and cross roads for miles

round, land or water being equally his element. He was at first a little shy, but when we gained his confidence, he seldom opened his mouth without saying something pungent, in a style peculiarly his own. Yet he had no idea of it himself. His face was as unmoved when we were in fits of laughter as before he had uttered a word. A more good-natured expression never set off very plain features. His dot of a nose had been so sunburnt the first day by wearing a Glengarry, that he appeared the second with a wide-awake grotesquely looped down to shade his nostrils. "The sun's got hould of your nose, and ears too, sir; mine's quite roasted; I micht ait it whan I laike." Seeing him tie something round a cork, I asked what it was. "Trumps, sir (the Jew's harp); a pair o' them makes very pretty music when they's well played." On telling this to the landlord, he assured me they were very musical at Scourie, "whaur Hector cam' frae." Our other boatman had been unwell, and Hector gave for explanation: "I was thinkin' what was the matter wi' him; he drank some ale and whisky in the morning *thegither;* one of them's best alane." Then, for fear of being unjust to the ale and whisky, he added, "And the worst o't was the cauld water on the tap o't." There was a poor maniac of Ross-shire, whom Hector affirmed fed for seven years on grass with the deer. "She was covered wi' lang hair, and could run as fast as themsels." He knew a very old woman in Tongue who

remembered her, and "she was very wild when first catched."

Under Hector's pilotage we trolled Loch Naver. A five-pound trout, three two-pounders—in size, shape, and colour exactly alike—and several near a pound, were the day's produce. The large one was ill-shaped and ugly; all the rest handsome trout. We saw nothing of the salmo-ferox in Loch Naver, but this was the only day we tried it.

Going out in haste, we asked Hector to get the landlord to direct a paper: "He can't read a word; no, nor yet write." After a pause: "Nor spall aither." And yet the schoolmaster was not far away, for we passed a bothy on the banks of the loch, made entirely of turf, with a little window, a rustic chair of state for the master, and stones for the scholars to sit on. This extempore school-house was private property, being put up by a keeper of the tenant of the shootings, and the manager of the adjoining sheep-farm, for their respective large families. When I inquired whether this *al fresco* school was now in use: "No, sir; the schoolmaister's clippin'" (shearing sheep).

At four in the morning we left Altnaharrow for Lairg, where we had secured places in the post-gig for Assynt.

At Lairg, when with great assiduity Hector was fixing our luggage in the post's gig, my young companion asked him "Where his sweetheart lived?"

He doubted if she was born: "Ere she'll be ripe, I'll be rotten, I daursay." Giving utterance to this bachelor foreboding, and with a kindly smile on his quaint features, Hector Gordon doffed his Glengarry and waved a mountain farewell. This amusing and plucky young fellow, however, had a sweetheart, whom he married. He settled in a village on "The Kyles," and became the most daring and successful fisherman of the district. In his eagerness to supply the market, one stormy morning he put out to sea, his boat was swamped, and he together with his comrade was drowned.

The drive from Lairg to Inchnadamff in Assynt was very sultry. Leaning over a rustic bridge, in the heat of the day, was a fat respectable English keeper. He had just arrived, and I thought looked despondingly at the steep frowning hills. Poor fellow! his red face and well-fed contour seemed ill fitted to contend with more trying ground than the turnip and stubble fields, of which he was likely musing. Our driver thought the same, for, with an unmistakable sneer, he averred, "He's grand at feeding the dowgs." We came through a fine sporting country, but heard only complaints of the deplorable state of young grouse from the long drought, and that the rivers had been useless for weeks.

Near the top of an Assynt mountain we encountered a delightfully patriarchal "flitting." As the steep road was also narrow, our driver had to pull up

in order to let the caravan pass, so we had full time to admire its simple order and discipline. First came two sons, each guiding a shaggy pony and light cart loaded with beds and furniture; then one of the daughters leading the milch cow. Next came her sister, skilfully driving four sheep with the aid of their two collies. The hale mother now trudged forward with a hen in her apron. Lastly followed the patriarch, like Jacob, with staff in hand, and at a sufficient distance behind the procession to give him a good view of the whole. There could not be a more contented or healthy-looking family; and the stately father, with his ruddy face browned by the mountain blasts, was a noble type of the Highland shepherd.

The district of Assynt is unrivalled for loch-fishing. It is full of lakes, with variety of fishing to tempt all tastes; tarns teeming with yellow trout to suit *impatient* fishermen,—and ladies, it would seem—for we actually saw two equipped with little shining fly-rods, ready to fill the creels, which no doubt they did. A gillaroo loch is only three miles from the inn, and in Loch Assynt larger feroxes are more frequently taken than in any other loch in the county. Although vexed to have only one day to spare for so fertile an angling range, we determined to make the most of it, and throw no chance of a heavy fish away. We immediately set about catching baits of various sizes, and despatched a lad for John Sutherland, the Duke's watcher, asking him to accompany us next day.

There were no fewer than four fishing-parties at the inn, each choosing his own sport, and plenty of it to choose from. All of them had tried the large loch for the big fish, but the inn people told us not one salmo-ferox had been extracted this year. A little enclosed pond was easily found, to keep the bait alive during the night, and we soon whipped out the necessary number to stock it.

We were early astir. Of course the live bait were first visited; and as some of the best had escaped, the fly-rod was again put in commission. My comrade was about to empty our fresh supply into the enclosed pool, when, with eager gesture, he called to me that there was a black rat, with a white throat, walking at the bottom among the trout. I was soon by his side, and at the same moment the little black-and-white intruder sneaked out of his bath and took shelter in a hollow of the rock. He was easily dislodged and captured, when the prize turned out to be that rare species, the water-shrew. We were told that they are numerous in that quarter, although I never met with one in any other part of Scotland.

So clear is the channel of Loch Assynt that, although we trolled deep—for the loch is large, and requires it—we scarcely gripped a weed, and only once or twice raked the bottom the whole time we were out. Some of the best fishing-ground was passed, however, before we had the first run, and landed a very handsome twelve-pound fish. We then trolled down to the

island; only common gulls on it, and a pair of mergansers. As the wind was favourable for the return, we came back over the same ground, which is decidedly better for heavy fish than the opposite side, and killed another good ferox. We had only one more run, which slipped off—no other offers; but we were only out from twelve till four, being obliged to be at Loch Inver in the evening. We never fished the lower end of this fine trolling loch, whither all the heaviest feroxes resort.

During this visit to Sutherland I had enjoyed the unexpected treat of going over the Duke's Museum of the natural history of the county. Only specimens killed on the estates are admitted, and, like the hieroglyphic histories of Mexico, a naturalist could from them surely discover the character of this large and interesting tract of country. The golden eagle stood for the mountain and deer forest; the erne for the savage rock coast; the phalaropes, sandpipers, and tringas told of sandy, gravelly creeks and harbours; the black and red throated divers, and many fresh-water dabblers, of the lonely hill lochs; the peregrine vouched for grouse moors, or rocks swarming with sea-birds;—in fact, there was no department of wild sport, belonging either to Highlands or sea-coast, that had not its representative in this zoological congress. One of the greatest curiosities was an albino sea-eagle. There was also a white jackdaw. The head-keeper pointed out what he

called the black eagle. This, however, was a male golden one, rather darker in the feathers than usual. The late Professor MacGillivray, of Aberdeen, held sanguine belief of another small kind of eagle which bred in the Highlands. He never was able to prove it; and with the exception of one or two stragglers of the little spotted eagle, no third species has ever been detected.

We hired the only craft in Lochinver to cross the Minch to Stornoway, where the west-coast steamboat calls. A filthy little smack, and dirtier skipper, with a pair of squab cabin-boys for crew, were not inviting, but we had no choice. When they were weighing anchor and hoisting sail, we were accosted by the old fishing-guide, who had till then been unsuccessfully fishing for his "morning." A bottle of ale at once uncorked the full tide of his gasconading folly. He first boasted of a brother, a sergeant in a Highland regiment. One of the fishing gentlemen quietly asked if he had not deserted. Neil's fury knew no bounds. "He deserted his wife, then?" suggested Mr ——, who thoroughly knew his man. "He was never merried," stuttered old hobnails, choking with passion. "Then how could he desert his wife?" was the adroit turn. Neil's muddled dilemma at this query was comical in the extreme. The stake-nets were in full view. The old fisherman, of course, was bragging of what he could do in that way. "Gie me a bag-net," quoth Neil. "I've none to give; and if I had,

I would put your ugly head in it," retorts the salmon-angler, who hated the very name of the deadly tool that spoilt his sport. We left old Neil as mad as a bull in a net.

"Where's her head?" roars the skipper from the bulk-head cabin. "She's east by waast!" shout the crew. With a few tacks we easily cleared the islands of Loch Inver, and the breeze being light and fair, we stood across for Stornoway harbour. What an enchanting sail! In full view were the rugged bluffs and headlands, with a background of heathery hills. In the distance the sun glanced on the bald tops of the rocky mountains gradually fading out of sight until they mingled with the warm blue sky. At the end of Storehead, a high narrow stone rears itself so exactly like a lighthouse that few could discover the cheat. Often a hatch of Mother Carey's chickens were clustered on the curling water. Now and then a stray one would flit past our "bow," so like a swallow as to justify the sailors' other appellation of the sea-swallow. I had never seen the stormy-petrel in his native element, and much enjoyed a peep through my telescope at many a group of these so-called birds of the tempest. Yet, spite of the stormy-petrel, the ocean slept calmly that night,—so calmly that I passed it pacing the deck, gazing at the radiant sunset and gorgeous rising, now so nearly blended—listening to the cries of the sea-birds, some so exquisitely plaintive, and others so wild and un-

earthly as to seem voices of spirits from the depths below.

Notwithstanding the novel excitement of our night cruise, it certainly was a relief to escape from the greasy skipper and his nauseous boat. He had disgusted us by recklessly cutting through the herring-nets, treating the remonstrances of the fishermen with supreme contempt. On one poor fellow, who, in agony for his net-rope, ventured to call him "no gentleman," he fired such a volley of disgusting expletives, as seemed in his own opinion fully to vindicate his claim to the aristocratic title. I frequently checked him, but, being half-seas-over, he forgot himself the next moment. We could not but wish him as prosperous and *speedy* a return voyage as befell two Loch Lomond boatmen equally well primed with grog. In the dusk they hoisted sail from Inverbeg for the top of the loch, but immediately ran aground on a sandbank. "Here she goes," says the steersman. "Spanking through it," adds his shipmate, passing the whisky-bottle. When day broke (feeling sure they must have made their port), they could only explain it by assuring each other that "the loch had turned topsy-turvy in the nicht."

On casting anchor in Stornoway harbour, our tipsy captain volunteered to direct us to a comfortable lodging, "set up by a freend o' his own, express for the quality;" but we were too well acquainted with himself to seek an introduction to his friends. After

demanding an exorbitant fare, promising fairly to reach Stornoway in time for the Clansman steamer, *as he more than suspected*, she had gone the day before. The Irish cabman who answered, when a friend of mine left the amount of hire to his conscience, "I'd rather lave it to your honour's; for to tell ye the truth, mine's not worth a farthin'," *had* a conscience, though a worn and battered one. This fellow evidently had none, so I saved myself the trouble of a useless appeal. We asked a fisherman in Stornoway which was the best inn. "Well, sir, the hottle's the best inn." The "hottle" was easily found, where the first object that presented itself was a stag's head and antlers, such as could not easily be matched in the overcrowded forests of modern days. The landlord's grandfather had been forester to Lochiel, and this noble heirloom was preserved as a memento of his rifle.

The whole fishing village—to borrow a phrase from one of themselves—seemed "indulging in dirt." The herring-fishers bad enough; the women-curers worse, if possible. They brought to my mind the predicament of an Edinburgh clergyman (always particularly neat and trim in his own attire), when an applicant for marriage presented himself in the most disgusting figure that ever darkened his study door. "When is it to take place?"—"Directly, sir." "You mean after you have cleaned yourself?"—(Looking down at himself with evident satisfaction,) "Och, I'm weel

enough." "You couldn't be married in such a dirty state?"—"*Me* dirty! What if ye saw *hir!*"

Hearing that there was a real live hermit in the neighbouring grounds of Sir James Matheson, we had the curiosity to visit his cell. He was a more favourable specimen than his better-known brother anchorite of the Holy Loch. At the cave among the rocks, a short distance from his house, with his sheep-dog "Lassie" at his foot, the gentle old man was seated. His white beard and contented expression harmonised exactly with the stillness around. His only trouble appeared to be the moustache, which annoyed him when "supping his kale." Looking earnestly at mine, he inquired if his would grow out the same way when they were "lang." Upon my saying there was a kind of pomatum would set them right, he was eager to find out whether the doctors sold it. We had a sight of his little library of Gaelic books, and a draught out of his spring-well. On returning to the town, Sir James's ferryman civilly offered to row us across the river, and when we told him the hermit's trouble—"He gets three shillings a-week for that beard o' his; he may weel buy the sauve for his mistachies."

Returning by the Clansman, we shipped the "Abbot of Iona" in the Sound of Mull. He informed us that his predecessor, St Columba, had first settled at Salen, in Mull, but being dissatisfied with the water, removed to Iona. "The

Abbot," so called by his co-presbyters, mentioned a little island on his territory of Icolmkill, which only keeps three sheep. Take off one, and the grass grows rank enough to entice the wild geese, who soon starve the pair of sheep. Put on four, and the islet can't support so many. The three sheep crop the grass just bare enough to keep off the geese, and not too bare to starve themselves. The island minister also described a large whale seen about ten days before. It made its way from Craignure to the lighthouse. Some time before, a fleet of three appeared at the head of the Sound; the largest, he thought, would measure thirty yards. The bull-whales are often dangerous, by following boats and upsetting them. In dark weather, especially about dusk, they might rise under a boat without seeing it; of course, a capsize must take place. "The Abbot" has seen them jump, like a salmon, fifteen yards clear of the sea, and come down with such a splash that the motion would swamp a boat. He added gravely, "I would not like to be near them in a craft of forty tons."

At Tobermory a most pompous piper boarded the Clansman, but some queer groans and quavers made it somewhat suspicious that the pipes were "in the wind's eye." However, a rival started up from Oban, in the shape of a blind lad and his fiddle. I daresay his pale face and sightless orbs assisted, but he soon silenced the blustering piper. Duncan

tied up his chanter, and, creeping to the top of the paddle-box, looked down in haughty disdain on the degenerate audience. The blind lad, happily ignorant of the savage eye glaring down on his performance, waxed his fiddlestick, scraped away at his masterpieces, and pocketed his pence in quiet content. Next morning, when we stepped ashore at Greenock, we found that *for once* the homely fiddle had fairly routed the great war-bagpipe, the latter having taken advantage of the night to cover a retreat.

THE SOUND OF MULL.

THE Island of Mull offers no great temptations to the sportsmen of August. Its streams are scarcely more than brooks, only worth a salmon-angler's attention after floods, during the short period when the white water has run out, and the brown current brawls down in volume to the sea. The fish are then pressing up to the moor-lochs which feed the streams; but should the angler miss these few fortunate hours, he must content himself with any sea-trout which may linger when the water is subsiding, if not too late even for them.

On no part of the island does grouse-shooting come up to a fair average; and although one may often get a good day at black-game in the beginning of the season, they are still far less plentiful than on the mainland, and soon seek shelter in the tangled woods, where most of the shots are unsatisfactory

snaps. Towards the end of autumn these woods and covers are much frequented by old blackcocks. If there are many trees of any size among them, pretty fair chances may be obtained by means of a slow, steady dog. When scared by the dog, an old blackcock is very apt to take refuge in the first tall tree, making a kind of *coo*, which may easily betray his roost. The dog, meantime, patiently watches, and so engrosses the attention of the bird as often to procure a tolerable chance. It is a good deal like stalking capercailzie; and as morning and evening are the best times, one or two of these shy birds may be bagged before beginning or after finishing a regular day's range in open ground. You require a knowing dog, such as would make capital work *against wind* by footing the birds. I have had dogs so thoroughly up to it, as to make a steady point from the foot of the birds, then circle round for the wind, and thus place the game between themselves and me. A fair shot is the probable result of these clever tactics.

In Mull, these rugged black-game copses are chosen retreats of the deer, which scarcely ever dare show themselves on the open hills; consequently the deer-sport is confined to wood-driving. Every strip of any size has its own complement, more or less, according to circumstances. They shift from covert to covert, of course, with high winds; so that a wood which contained scarcely any, one day, may

be found to harbour twenty the next, from a change of weather. The first year I shot there, an old hind and her calf *never* left my largest covert. She was not disturbed; and next year, though another calf was added, the former one remained with her also. I could have found the three quite easily any day the whole year round. I noticed a still more rare instance of family affection among my flock of sheep in Aberdeenshire. One of the ewes had a jet-black lamb, which was reared on account of its beauty. Next season this lamb had another just like itself; but the grandmother, having none, seemed fonder of the little one than even its own mother, and the three never separated from each other, but kept apart from all the rest of the flock.

As deer in the more open woods keep far ahead of the beaters, there is generally little difficulty in sending them through one or other of the numerous passes. The day before leaving Mull in October, although I got no chance of a shot, and was early stopped by heavy rain, we had as pretty a wood-drive as the island could show. My muster of twelve beaters under the old weaver were in full march for Garmony wood by nine o'clock. "Shamish Weaver" boasts that for thirty years he has never been absent from a Scalastal hunt, and enjoys one with perhaps even more zest than the laird himself. He is a clannish man, loves his wild island, and has a stake in it as long as there are fish in the

sea, or deer on the hill. I should like to introduce him to the drunken penniless "wabster" of the burgh, who, upon being told that his principles would lead to a national bankruptcy, doggedly dived his fingers to the bottom of his pewter snuff-mull, and muttered between his teeth, "I'll staund the risk." Shamish probably would be unable to comprehend what national bankruptcy meant, but rather than stand the risk of the woods and the nets, and the cobles and the deer of Mull falling into other hands, he would sink "reform," and the "rights of man," and "social equality," and his burgh brother of the loom along with them, to the bottom of the Sound.——Proud as a general, he is marshalling his troops for a new point of untried strategy—namely, to reverse the usual course, and bring up the deer from the south to the north passes. We have a finer view of the hunt by this experiment of the weaver's, but it has the disadvantage of giving the deer far greater choice of passes; a decided objection when there are few guns, as in the present case, to guard them. I chose my stance by a rock that gave a bird's-eye view of the open passages where the deer were most likely to cross when pressing in advance of the beaters, whose discordant yelling was heard now loud and clear, then suddenly dying away according to the inequalities of the ground. The hunt was still far back when I spied two deer picking their steps through a vista of the

wood. Sometimes they would face about to listen, and again, with a dissatisfied shake of the head, resume their shambling trot. Couched among the heather, and screened by my granite rock, I was watching their wayward path, hoping they might choose a course within range of either of the two rifles guarding the upper passes. My speculations about them were abruptly ended by a glance at the moving legs of three deer stealing quietly among the tree-stems right up to my rock. When almost within distant range they halted, faced the steep, and the leading hart, with arched neck and ears thrown forward, stood staring at some object on the heights above. It was Shamish Weaver, who, by a masterly manœuvre, was trying to turn them back again into my pass. What a picture was before me!—the old grey man, like a wizard of the mountain, casting a charm over the spell-bound deer. There was the majestic leading stag still as a statue, but yet so graceful and lifelike, petrified at the maniac figure stamping and raging before him. At length he decided on facing the seen danger, and spite of the raving and screaming, and the very peats which the weaver, in his frenzy, hurled down, crossed leisurely within pistol-shot, and gained the wide hill.

In so clear a wood as Garmony, a rough wind or the foot-prints of a beater will make them burst out anywhere. They will track a man by the foot

long after he is gone. Two stalkers, at the close of an unsuccessful day, were resting behind a knoll close by a brook. Three harts came down from the hills to drink. Immediately detecting human footsteps, the three antlered heads lowered on the scent in a direct line from the men. One of them raised his rifle, fired at the nearest head, which was the only part of the deer he could see, and, to his utter amazement, found he had killed the three, shooting them all fair through the head!

When I doubted the strength of the ball to penetrate three hard skulls, my informant assured me there was no doubt about the matter, and that it was easily proved if I wished.

There are no roe-deer in Mull, which is an advantage, for when deer and roe haunt the same woods, each frequently mars the sport of the other. The roe, being loath to quit the shelter of a good-sized wood, soon becomes so knowing, and hardened to beaters, that, rather than face open ground, they will turn on the hue and cry, and break through the line like sheep. In roe-shooting, therefore, I always prefer a stanch fox-hound, which exposes all their covert doubles and wiles, often amusing and exciting enough to study even should no shot be obtained. Beaters also make roes frisky and uncertain in taking the passes. You never can guess exactly where they may break cover. When pursued by a hound, they are much steadier in pace,

and far truer to the usual ground. I have constantly noted that the chances, if fewer in number, are *far surer* when the roe is hunted by dogs than when driven by beaters, although more skill is required to secure them. There is often a great prejudice against the voice of a fox-hound; and I have known men unobservant enough to fancy hares and all other game flying right and left at the sound. Yet it is nevertheless true, that a really good hound will scarcely disturb any quarry but what he is first laid on. An indifferent animal, with an inferior nose, may shift from the old track to a fresher often enough, but such should never be slipped in the coverts at all. A really useful fox-hound for roe or deer should stick to its first scent for hours. By watching narrowly, you will perceive it is not disturbing other game, and that the creatures it is not pursuing will show little alarm, often allowing the hunt to pass pretty near without moving from their ground.

At different periods of my sporting life I had two hounds so true and painstaking that, if their game was not killed, they rarely lost the first track till the close of the short winter day. When the moon was up they have sometimes run the scent far into the night. One of them, after sticking to its track from twelve o'clock noon, and all through the following night, drove the roe into the loch next morning. The hound boldly took the water about forty yards behind the roe.

A few years ago, another stanch hound of mine fairly ran down an old fox. At breakfast-time one winter morning, the sly one, evidently on the look-out for poultry, was winded by grim Damper, who instantly broke away from the other dogs before the kennel. The game-watcher, fancying the hunt was a roe, tried several times to take up the hound. About three o'clock he heard him puzzling over some thick gorse, and when trying to couple him, a fox hobbled out in so distressed a state that he again laid on the hound, who ran into and worried him, after another half-mile's chase. The fox—a large dog, and in excellent condition—had lost two toes from the fore-foot by a trap, otherwise a single hound could never have run him down in six hours. This hound was by no means equal to the two former ones, either in nose or powers of endurance.

In the winter of 1854 we killed twenty-four roes at Blackhall in Aberdeenshire, nineteen falling to my own gun. Of the whole nineteen, only five were killed to beaters, thirteen were hunted out by dogs, and one I killed after stalking it by its tracks in snow. The winter before, I traced another fine buck in the snow, and shot him. But snow-stalking is tedious and uncertain at best, and there are few days in a whole winter when it can be followed with any chance of success. It is useless to try when the snow is ever so slightly crisped with frost. They are sure to *hear you* before you *see them*. After

snow has lain a day or two, even should there be no frost, the roe-tracks become so numerous and confused that a man, even with the eye of an Indian, would generally find himself following a circle, or lost in a labyrinth of roe-marks. The only time, therefore, for a snow-stalk, is directly after a fall of snow. A pure white dress and cap are indispensable.

The fox is even more shy of a driving hunt than red-deer, and is apt to take the guns unawares by cantering up to the passes before he is expected. Upon the most distant sound of the hue and cry, if there is a wily one in any part of the wood, he at once begins to retreat after his own peculiarly subtle and methodical style. On the morning of one of the roe-drives above mentioned, I had directed a strong company of beaters to the far end of our largest wood, and could barely distinguish the first faint shouts, when I noticed a fox, with measured, swaggering pace, making for my ambush. His chuckling, self-confident air spoke contempt for the noisy and distanced enemy in the rear, but he had evidently never calculated on an ambuscade so far to the front. It was a fine cross-shot, and he fell dead. The drive was nearly two miles behind, and an hour elapsed before they brought up the roes.

The frost and snow seldom last long in Mull, but the winter tempests of the Sound are frequent and sublime. The following sketch from the 'Mountain

of the Two Winds'[1] is not in the least overdrawn: "The wind was high yesterday, and the waterfalls of Morven, ascending and spreading in blue curled vapours, looked like the smoke of glowing subterranean furnaces all along the edges of the cliff. I never saw the like in any picture. On the sea, too, the effect was very fine. There was all the clear chill of the northern climates, the colour dark blue; and as the wind caught the surface, it was, as it were, shivered, and the spray, like pounded ice, blown along with a rattling noise, and whirled into shifting, spiral, waterspout columns, to fall when the gust that supported them sank from exhaustion. When I got to the top of the hill, there was a most terrific gale and snowstorm. The clouds rolled furiously, and one felt as in a chariot of rolling vapour. I sat for ten minutes enjoying it, when all of a sudden the mist cleared away as quickly and majestically as it came. In the thick of it I heard Tom and his dogs a thousand feet below, although I could see nothing but vapour; literally, a voice from the clouds. My dog put up two single ptarmigan, and, soon after, a pair, all of snow-white hue with black tips, but I only fired one very long shot with No. 7. So it sent out a few feathers, and I hope did little other harm. I then walked along the top to the head of Garmony Burn, which I followed down, and killed three cocks, letting off one, at which the first

[1] By my eldest son.

barrel snapped. To-day all is sunk in gloomy stillness, the reaction of yesterday's fury."

My next climb to the cairn-peaks of Dundeveuch (Dundaghavithe) was in fair contrast to this stern scene of savage magnificence. On one of those inspiring summer days, when a light breeze tempers the broiling sun, staff in hand, and coupled dogs by my side, I wound a devious track, after many a halt, to the retreat of the hardy ptarmigan. Comparison rules our feelings more than we are aware, or perhaps would allow. The man brought up among hills, when threading the bleak heather, has little of that lonely depression experienced by the inhabitant of cultivated plains, or the frequenter of courtly cities. He knows many of the mountain-flock by head-mark, is well acquainted with their shepherd, and has made friends with their shy collie. The grouse rise naturally, as if accustomed to man, and dreading his power. The moss-cheeper darts from her hiding among the heath; nor is the social swallow a rare visitor to the trackless moors. But let even this mountain child ascend to the higher regions, where the rock supplants the heather—where the sheep seldom feed, and the grouse are never seen—where the shepherd's whistle and his collie's bark are rarely heard, and the *wild tameness* of the ptarmigan is the certain pledge that destroying man is a stranger there, and even he will know their power, and feel that "this is solitude."

I stood on the crest of Dundeveuch, my eye sated, almost wearied; nothing but mountain and ocean, brown hill and purple sea. On every side grandeur; too still, too great for me, in my present littleness, to enjoy. My dogs stared round languidly; no cover for grouse, this rough pavement, and the sharp points had already frayed their feet. I set them free to examine the ground, for the only game they perhaps had never seen; but their heart was not in their work, and they picked their steps tenderly, heedless even of the glorious sea-eagle which bounded up towards the sky, and, cleaving the air with steady wing, settled down on the opposite cairn: she soon rose again, and returned to her first resting-place. If the desolate splendour was but heightened by the opportune and lonesome flight of the savage bird, the spell was partly broken, for, pealing up from the abyss, but modulated by distance, and echo-like, came the iron voice of the raven. Far, far down the dizzy chasm, timing their wings to their croak, the parent birds seemed scenting prey in the distance, and were guiding their three young ones to the mid-day meal.

The birds and beasts of prey in Mull are scarce, with the exception of Royston crows. I have seen and destroyed a few stoats, but have never yet detected a weasel, or noticed their footmarks on the snow. When snow is on the ground, however, they live much underneath it, among the rough grass,

where they find abundance of mice, &c. I once saw a weasel bore through half a foot of snow to the ground below; it soon reappeared, making a fresh hole, but, on seeing me, slunk back again. I inspected the holes it had made, and they were so small as scarcely to admit my finger. No doubt it had a plentiful table, as well as a comfortable shelter from the blast, the warm coating of snow forming a roof as serviceable to the large family of rats and mice as to their destroyer. There are neither foxes, wildcats, martens, nor foumarts on the island—at least I have never seen or heard of them. When ranging the hills of my own shooting-ground, I have frequently started the erne, but only once the golden eagle. A few pairs of the former breed annually among the inaccessible cliffs of the western side of the island, and there is often *an eyrie* of the golden eagle on the cliffs of Morven, but I rather think no young ones of this species are hatched in Mull. The absence of blue hares, their favourite prey, may partly account for it.

Lambs and red-deer calves are safe from eagles, unless on steep hills, where they can throw themselves into the air with their heavy burden. On flat ground, instinct warns the eagle not to attempt what she cannot accomplish. In summer, when food is plentiful, eagles eat a little every day, without filling the crop. It is only in winter that they gorge themselves on dead carcasses. The sea-eagle especially is

often put to great straits at that season, and will wander far to escape starvation. I examined one shot by a farmer in March 1857 at Hambledon, three miles below Henley-on-Thames. The bird, although large, seemed to be in its second year, as the tail was mottled brown. Most likely it was weak from hunger, for the farmer, at first mistaking it for a boy! walked leisurely to the root of the tree, and knocked it down with small shot. From its brown tail, the Sassenachs thought it a fine golden eagle.

On the 15th of February 1857, two sea-eagles and their young one of the year kept coursing round my shooting-quarters in Mull for the greater part of the day. They chased and dived after each other in high glee. It being Sunday, they seemed aware of the day of safety, otherwise it is not unlikely that one of the white tails might have been added to our list of specimens for 1858.

A couple of hen-harriers always hatch on one of my lower moors, and both of them frequently give the stubble-fields a range in autumn. Sparrow-hawks and kestrils are common all over the island. One of the former had the coolness to strike down a thrush before our door, and was itself struck down by my son's gun, when carrying off the musical *morceau*. The peregrine, though numerous among the wilds of Morven, seldom crosses over to Mull. When swimming in the Sound early one morning, I heard great commotion among the sea-birds. No

wonder, for there was the peregrine with one of them in its talons, within a few yards of my head, which it most likely mistook for a seal! It flew with all speed to the mainland, and had evidently made a raid on Mull, returning home with the plunder like a true freebooter. A short time after, a peregrine, probably the same, dashed at a sly old mallard scared out of a ditch by my scringe-netters. With a loud screech the mallard dropt like a stone among the fishermen, when the falcon, foiled in the stoop, sheered off across the sea to Morven. The common buzzard I have sometimes seen in the more remote districts, and the great corbie seems to thrive among the extensive sheep-walks of all the wilder hills.

The Royston or grey crow is, however, by far the most formidable foe to game, for one of these birds will destroy as many grouse in the egg as twenty golden eagles will after they are full-fledged. The other rapacious birds are thinly scattered over the island, but vast numbers of these crows occupy the woods and hills in spring and summer, crowding the shores during autumn and winter in large flocks. They are nearly as destructive as the raven to young lambs, and their instinct at once detects the sickly sheep, whose eyes they scoop out in a moment with their wedge-bill. Of course the shepherds are mortal enemies to the "hoodachs," as they call them, and ably second our efforts for their destruction. The only effectual way to deal with such numbers is by

poison. To prevent mischief, I gave orders that the poisoned baits should be laid chiefly on the islet-rocks along the coast, and, unless absolutely necessary, to place none on the mainland. As a general rule, the banks of either fresh or salt water are good places to plant traps. Winged vermin especially much frequent the shores for any deposits of carrion washed up by the waters. In rugged districts of sea-coast, where wild-cats are not extinct, they prowl the shores nightly in search of dead fish cast up by the waves, and are easily trapped by a piece of stale fish, which they prefer to fresh. The shore-supply, especially in winter, is considerable, which no doubt is one reason why the grey crows congregate there so much, neglecting their upland feeding-grounds. I have often tried to find out why so many toad-fish are left by the tide every autumn and winter in a dead or dying state, but, like the dead shrew-mice which strew the paths at harvest-time, it yet remains a mystery. Those ugly flat fish, called by the villagers "clocking hens," sometimes grow to an immense size, and when turned on their back, the enormous circular mouth, armed with formidable tiers of teeth, looks not unlike a vermin-trap—a very efficient one, too, to its owner! When grounded alive, the toad-fish loses strength gradually, until at last the only sign of life is a languid flap of the flippers at long intervals. It is very destructive to other fish, and so ravenous that a full-grown cormorant was taken out

of the stomach of one entangled in the stake-nets of Tongue. The term cormorant is most appropriately applied to the greedy; for not only does that bird consume its own weight of fish *per diem*, but the large mouthful it can bolt seems like a feat of magic. In this case the biter was bit, and the stake-netters were in excellent humour with the sea-monster for having played so good a practical joke. Another curious instance of a fish having swallowed a large bird was told me by Sanderson the bird-stuffer, Edinburgh. He says that the only Sclavonian grebe received by him, except the one I sent in the winter of 1860, was taken out of the stomach of a cod!

Fish are certainly more voracious than either birds or animals, and are also more apt to prey upon their own species. I had ocular proof in the summer of 1859 that the fresh-water eel is as great a cannibal as the pike. One of my children set a line, baited with an earth-worm, in the burn that runs past Scalastal, in Mull. A small eel took the bait, and was itself swallowed by a big one. Although untouched by the hook, the large eel was pulled ashore before disgorging its tiny neighbour. It was nearly as thick as a man's wrist, and weighed five pounds.

Carrion and grey crows not only search out and devour vast numbers of eggs, but are able to destroy young birds of considerable size. Even jackdaws sometimes feed their nestlings with very young game, but only in parched summers, when the supply of

slugs and worms fails. One very dry season, I remember two nides of pheasants nearly all devoured by a pair of daws. The pheasants, when hatched, were placed, with their bantam foster-mothers, in coops under some large trees, in the hollow trunks of which the daws were also rearing their brood. Every day the keeper missed one or two young pheasants. Completely puzzled, he determined not to quit them till he had detected the thief. At last down hops the daw, peering about, until a young pheasant strayed a little farther than the others. It was instantly picked up like a grub, placed in a fork of the tree—a tap on the head, and then the young jacks breakfasted on pheasant. The keeper shot the old daws, and the remaining young pheasants were unmolested. All game above a week old are, however, safe from jackdaws, and they never attack birds when they can procure their more natural food.

Huge Norway rats are very abundant in the stubble fields that skirt the Sound of Mull. They leave their snug places of abode as soon as the corn ripens, and never quit the fields till driven away by the cold. Were they as thickly scattered over the ground in spring, they would no doubt do great injury to the young game; but at that time they live much more in colonies, and hide themselves in barns and outbuildings, where they rear their young. When shooting partridges on the banks of a stream, one of our dogs made a steady point into the pool.

He had winded a Norway rat, which jumped into the water and dived. I saw the creature struggling to keep under, a few inches below the surface, until, disabled by a shot, it crept under the bank, where I picked it up dying. From first to last, this land-rat had been fully half a minute under water, and never put up its head for breath, except when striking ground to creep ashore.

The adder is also common in Mull, and of course destroys *very young* game; but as it preys on vermin too, perhaps the good it does counterbalances the evil. A few years ago, a full-grown field-mouse was found in the stomach of an adder killed near me in Kincardineshire; while another had managed to catch and swallow a young bird. They must have the same power of extending the jaws as the boa-constrictors have; and it would be quite as wonderful, though less astounding, to see an adder seize and bolt a large field-mouse, as to witness the gigantic boa's performance with an antelope.

If proper remedies be used at once, the bite of an adder, however severe, is not generally fatal. In July 1860 the child of a shepherd in Mull was bitten by one basking in the sun on the cottage doorstep. No doubt the creature struck in self-defence at the little hand attempting to catch it; for when the distracted mother flew to her child, the adder was luxuriously coiled up, enjoying the sunshine, and never tried to scape till she threw a stone, when it wriggled under

the flags. In her terror, the poor woman magnified the adder into a horrible monster, covered with bright-coloured hair. The shepherd instantly killed a fowl, splitting open the body, and applying the warm halves to the wound. The poison was thus sucked out, and, on the application of sweet oil well rubbed in, the black and swollen arm began to look more natural, and the pain subsided. In a few days it was quite well.

Unless forced to defend themselves, adders are quite as timid as mice or rats. If seized adroitly by the tail, and lifted off the ground, they have no power to turn on the hand that holds them. When they attempt to screw up the head, a gentle shake sets them straight again. I brought home three very fine ones for preservation in this way; and when I laid them down on the lawn, they were so cowed that, far from showing signs of fight, they had just spirit enough to attempt escape. The most defiant hisser I detected in early summer; the other two, taken in autumn, seemed a male and a female. One of them had devoured a frog, mouse, or bird, and was corked up in whisky with the signs of its gluttony very apparent. The pair were discovered under the same fir-tree among the heather. Two days after securing the first, the same person warned me of its neighbour.

The winter-shootings of the "Sound" amply compensate for the dearth of summer and autumn sport.

The late Sir Fowell Buxton, as we have before mentioned, writes to a friend his "serious opinion that good woodcock-shooting was a preferable thing to glory." Few senators would sink self so low as to rank the flight of the woodcock higher than flights of oratory, and fewer still would even have the honesty to record it if they did. But in singling out the pursuit of this bird, the great anti-slavery advocate showed how much more exciting it was to him than any other shooting. With the exception of wild-fowl, I quite agree with him, and these two sports are certainly the strength of the Sound of Mull.

The first hard frost generally brings the best flight of woodcocks. The succeeding frosts, even though more severe, seldom produce so many birds. Wild-fowl, on the contrary, crowd the shores in exact proportion to the severity of the weather; and should the frost be more than usually intense, and the storm protracted, rare and curious specimens constantly turn up.

Of all shooting comforts a really useful water-retriever is most rare. Of late years I have discarded three dogs of this description, all pronounced first-rate and thoroughly broke, by their trainers—men who were considered no mean judges of the capabilities of a sporting dog. One of these swimming paragons was too off-hand to reflect; another, though cautious, was self-willed and sulky; while the third,

being well endowed with common-sense, and good temper to use it, now and then unfortunately carried his gift to the extreme of discretion, by refusing to face a cold or stormy sea.

When the days were, like the old Aberdeen sermons, "short and cauld and clear," my son went down to Mull for some winter shooting. He had only a knowing quiet-tempered old pointer, who had never either retrieved or taken the water in his life. One of the first-killed shots, a fine Merganser drake, was being rapidly floated away by the tides: disdaining to imitate the discreet retriever, he instantly plunged into the sea—no uncommon winter exploit —and brought the bird to land. The pointer, whose aid he thought it useless to invoke, watched the whole proceeding from the rocks, and thoroughly comprehended it. Soon afterwards, on his master firing into a flock of turnstones as they flitted past, and dropping three in the water, he volunteered his unsought services, and brought them one by one to the shore. Since then, although he never attempts to mouth game on land, he duly recovers what falls into the water, and in approaching wild-fowl is quite as careful not to spoil the shot as most "thorough-broke" retrievers.

About the beginning of February this useful creature died of inflammation, most likely consequent on the change of his profession. His master had again to do the work himself, and the last day he was out

—the 7th of February—had two long swims after disabled widgeon, both of which he landed.

For courage and devotion to his chief, this pointer might have matched a "'45" clansman; but, like the old Highlander, I once saw him show evident signs of superstition. When ranging a grass-field, he pointed a hare, which soon moved from her form, rearing herself on hind-legs straight as a small gate-post. The dog at once showed evident signs of uneasiness, by breaking his statuesque position, looking over his shoulder for advice, and twitching his tail most nervously. But when "puss," pursuing her advantage, actually paced ten yards towards him, erect as a drill sergeant, he fairly turned tail, and, with every sign of terror, took shelter behind his master. There were several witnesses besides myself to this reversal of nature—viz., the hare pursuing the dog. Most likely her young were near.

FRAGMENTS.

SINCE writing the chapter on "Wild-Fowl Shooting on the Highland Lochs," I have been much struck by the contrast which this sport presents to the gloomy picture that we are generally accustomed to draw of our wintry weather, with its obstacles to outdoor recreations. Even Sir Walter Scott seems to have forgotten the resources which winter wild-fowling affords against indoor *ennui*. Had he taken counsel with his friend the elder Monkbarns, who was "an arrant fowler," and whose death I attribute less to the "cold caught in his vocation while shooting ducks in the swamp called Kittlefitting Moss," than to the bottle of brandy which he drank "that very night to keep the cold out of his stomach," he would have given us a more cheery side to the dark description of December which he draws in 'Marmion.' Far from welcoming the "busy day and social night" in the

city, such weather would have at once allured me to the wildest shooting within my reach.

"When dark December glooms the day,
And takes our autumn joys away;
When short and scant the sunbeam throws,
Upon the weary waste of snows,
A cold and profitless regard,
Like patron on a needy bard;
When silvan occupation's done,
And o'er the chimney rests the gun,
And hang, in idle trophy, near,
The game-pouch, fishing-rod, and spear;
When wiry terrier, rough and grim,
And greyhound, with his length of limb,
And pointer, now employed no more,
Cumber our parlour's narrow floor;
When in his stall the impatient steed
Is long condemn'd to rest and feed;
When from our snow-encircled home,
Scarce cares the hardiest step to roam,
Since path is none, save that to bring
The needful water from the spring;
When wrinkled news-page, thrice conn'd o'er,
Beguiles the dreary hour no more,
And darkling politician, cross'd,
Inveighs against the lingering post,
And answering housewife sore complains
Of carriers' snow-impeded wains;—
When such the country cheer, I come,
Well pleased, to seek our city home;
For converse, and for books, to change
The Forest's melancholy range,
And welcome, with renew'd delight,
The busy day and social night."

Many birds, especially those whose young ones run as soon as hatched, and, being thus dispersed, are

more likely to be stumbled on, have various arts to arrest the attention of the chance wanderer, and decoy him from the brood. The lapwing is always most clamorous when you are furthest from the objects of her solicitude; so is the curlew: but should you approach them, the mother appears quite careless and unconcerned. Grouse and partridges flutter along the ground as if wounded and unable to fly, the latter uttering a most discordant scream. I have always thought these birds overdo their part, and that the lapwing is far superior to them in the art of misleading. The manœuvres of wild-ducks are similar to those of grouse, and they give notice to the ducklings when they are to dive by a loud quack, which is instantly obeyed. But the most finished actress I have seen was a mire-snipe, which fluttered up exactly as if the tip of its wing was broken. It flew in this disabled manner for about ten yards, when it fell as if exhausted, and lay struggling on its side. I walked forward to seize it, muttering, "Well, if they haven't been poaching even now." Up it rose again, apparently with the greatest difficulty. But this time it was longer in doing the tumble-down part. Suspecting the trick, I followed to see how it would end. After enticing me some distance, it sprang up with its easy natural motion, and triumphantly twisted out of sight.

When I lived at Lennie, my children set an old pea-hen, long solitary, with some bantam eggs. Five came out, and she proved so careful a stepmother as to rear them all. Some knowing observers declared that her long legs would walk them to death. Not so, for often she carried the whole five on her back; and if any one seemed weak or flagging, she invariably took it up for long together, as a good nurse would spare her sickly child. When they were old enough to roost, she decoyed them to the large boughs of some old tree, where they continued to rest even during the long cold nights of our northern winter. She tended them with great care after they were quite able to shift for themselves, always feeding them with any pieces of bread thrown to her. The little bantams showed equal attachment to their kind protectress; and it was not till spring had far advanced that they left her to join the other poultry.

All creatures which feed upon flying insects, such as the swallow, the bat, &c., must follow and dart at their prey; and this circumstance gives an uncertain irregular cast to their own flight. There is no more curious example of these evolutions than the large greenish-brown autumnal dragon-fly. This fierce dragon generally appears in July, and remains till the

winter sets in. It has a beat of its own, which it plies most regularly, and its rapid darts are more like a bird of prey than an insect. You see one, perhaps, at a distance; he is close to you in an instant; at two more of his aerial bounds he clears the adjacent plane-tree, teeming with insects; down the opposite side, round your head again, and all the while seizing gnats in his iron pincers like magic. I once caught in my hat one of these Gorgons, which gave me the opportunity from its being hampered with some load. To my surprise the booty was a middle-sized butterfly, firmly held in its forceps, and most unwillingly released. The head of the poor victim was nearly separated from its body. A most daring interference with the pastime of a quiet angler, staying at my house, was attempted by this insect last summer. He got hold of a trout in Cladich Burn, and by too brisk a tug, jerked the baited hook out of its mouth, and over his shoulder. The dragon pounced down, seized the worm, and was actually whirled round his head, and nearly into the water, ere it relinquished its grasp. These autumn dragons are very numerous upon and about the moors on Loch-Awe-side, and no doubt do good service by consuming so many gnats and midges. I have sometimes knocked one down with at least half-a-dozen in his ravenous maw. The strength of the wasp is even greater. After holding down and biting to death a fly nearly as big as himself, I have seen him make away with his burden quite easily. The

mason-wasp, also, after constructing its cylinder, will carry a caterpillar as large as itself, and deposit it above its egg, for food to the young grub when it emerges. As great a feat for an insect, as the carrying off an ox for a lion or a tiger.

Some curious and interesting anecdotes of the nightingale and other soft-billed birds, during the nesting-time, were mentioned to me in conversation, and I begged the kind narrator to commit them to writing. His high standing is sufficient guarantee for their authenticity.

"We never had the nightingales so near the house as this year (1841). It was about the middle of May when, from hearing them sing constantly, and one of them almost at the door, we were led to look about for their nest, and soon found it close upon the ground, in a Virginian raspberry bush, most skilfully fenced about by the canes. It was within a very few yards of the house—not more than ten. At first we were very cautious, and looked at it but seldom, and at a distance; but we soon found that we might be bolder, and, in fact, came to look at the bird as she was sitting, as near and as often as we pleased, without any symptom of annoying her. Quite at the beginning of June the young birds were hatched, and all

went on well till the 9th, when L. M. R., hearing a loud and unusual noise from the old birds, went to look how things were going on at the nest. It seemed prodigiously full; and, upon looking close, she perceived that it was filled with an enormous rat, then in the act of devouring what remained of a young one, while both the old birds were flying and chattering over it in the most violent agitation. We soon found, however, that they had contrived to carry off four of the little ones into a place of safety, where they watched over them with most extraordinary care. For some days we could not any of us stir out of the house without the old birds instantly appearing close at our side, and following us wherever we went about the garden in the most fearless manner; and we had a little Skye terrier very like a rat at the time, that had a terrible life of it, and was scolded and almost pecked wherever he went. All this went on for nearly a month without any apparent diminution of anxiety on the part of the birds, till at last the young birds grew bold, and used to come daily for crumbs at the kitchen-door. One of them, indeed, in the evening came into the house, and was shut up all night, but, when the windows were opened in the morning, flew against them and killed itself. This was almost the last we saw of them that year.

"Last summer (1840) a redstart built its nest in a magnolia by the side of the garden wall at Sir Henry Bunbury's, Barton, Suffolk. The bird laid

four eggs, and then, without any known cause, forsook the nest. Very soon afterwards a flycatcher came, and, having spread a little covering over the redstart's eggs, laid one of her own. Upon this one egg she began immediately to sit; and while she was sitting, a Jenny-wren came and also laid one egg in the same nest. She too thereupon began to sit, and both birds sat together upon the same nest for many days, and were seen and looked at together by many persons daily. Both also hatched their young; but as the flycatcher came first, it was fledged first and flew away. Almost immediately afterwards there came at night a violent thunderstorm, which, as the nest of course had not the wren's usual covering, filled it with rain, and the poor little one was drowned. In this state I saw it next morning, August 17, lying dead and soaked upon the redstart's eggs; and the whole of this story, just as I have related it, I heard two several times from Sir Henry and Lady Bunbury."

I have been told by old people who "wonned" on the banks of Loch Lomond, when adders were plentiful, that they frequently noticed these reptiles in the warm summer nights creep from the tangled brushwood, take the water, and swim in the direction of the islands. They were easily seen on their voyage,

as they always kept their heads above water. There is less opportunity now of observing these "fish without fins," since the banks have been cleared and cultivated; but to this day Inch Tavannach and Inch Connachan are much infested by them, and indeed all the islands which grow copse and heather. I had a narrow escape near the top of Inch Tavannach rock, when after black-cocks, one burning day in September. I heard the creature's malignant hiss close to me, and struck it on the head with the butt of my gun. It appeared stupefied; and I was in the act of tying a string round its neck, when I espied another coiled up within a yard of my hand, but quite still. I stepped back for a stick, and gave him a smart rap, which appeared to have put him also beyond further mischief; tied the other end of the string round his neck, and lifted both into my game-bag. I had no success with the old cocks, so soon rowed home. My brother was standing on the quay, and bantered me about coming back with an empty bag. I denied the charge, and in proving my point, out jumped the two adders quite alive among our fingers. We were close together at the bag opening, but when my scaly game made its appearance, there was a clear space of ten yards at two bounds. The adders were between two and three feet long.

We chanced on another very large fellow, one hot July day, basking on Inch Moan, just where the shore and heather join. I cut him in two with a

blow of my stick, and he had a frog in his stomach, which he must have sucked down head foremost like a boa-constrictor. I have little doubt they destroy quantities of young game in the same way, as they are very numerous on our moors, where I have sometimes shot them to my dog's point. Many keepers declare that they destroy the eggs of game; but I rather think an adder would be puzzled either to break them or bolt them whole. Hedgehogs suck the eggs, and even devour the very young birds. It is therefore probable that their depredations are often laid to the charge of the adder. My brother's gamekeeper had a pheasant's nest full of eggs consumed by one hedgehog. Expecting to find the bird sitting, he was surprised to count only six out of fourteen eggs. Next day there were only two. He therefore set a trap and caught the robber, a large hedgehog. In the Highlands, however, hedgehogs are rather scarce. Not so in the Lowlands. I seldom went out partridge-shooting, either in Selkirkshire or East Lothian, without my dogs coming to a dead point at one of those bristly balls; and in the former county I took six out of the same hibernaculum of turnip-leaves. Such numbers must do serious injury to the preserves.

The Norway rat is another formidable enemy to game, but does not so much frequent the fields till

the grain is ripe. The little patches of corn which skirt Kilmun Moor are chosen resorts of these destructive creatures. The indefatigable terrier may then be seen digging at a burrow for half a day; while stealthy puss, in the twilight, more sure of carrying her point by guile, sits patiently watching another colony of Norsemen, until one of them creeps from the hole. But the rats are still more afraid of the stoat; there is no escape from him, for he can follow them to the inmost recesses of their earth. Early one morning, when looking after black-cocks on the stubble, I detected a stoat entering a rat's hole. As he had not seen me, I stood ready to shoot him, expecting his reappearance. I noticed something move on the ground, a little way off, which proved to be one of the largest male rats I had ever seen, giving its last kick, and weltering in a pool of blood. It had been seized by the crown of the head, and no other wound was perceptible. Wishing to ascertain whether hunger or enmity was the cause of this attack, I returned after breakfast, and found the rat dragged to some distance, and its neck and shoulders devoured.

At another time, in East Lothian, I witnessed a most curious chase after a rabbit by a stoat. Close to the house of Hopes, where I was spending the summer, there are two knolls, one a low sandy one, covered with furze and broom, and all catacombed by rabbit-burrows. Standing upon the higher knoll, I perceived on the one beneath a rabbit dotting along,

with a young one, as I thought, following. It was soon plain that the little creature in the rear was a stoat. From my high position, I easily commanded a full view of the hunt. Twice did the tiny pursuer track its prey the whole round of the knoll, a distance of some hundred yards, the rabbit refusing to enter any of the numerous burrows, although it was sometimes so nearly seized as to be obliged to vault into the air to escape. At last it got a little way ahead, and took refuge in some thick brushwood. Expecting that its fate was now sealed, I ran down, and in so doing alarmed the stoat, which made off into a drain. To give the rabbit a chance for its life, I started it also, and it cantered away in an opposite direction. On telling the story to a farmer there, he said that these hunts were not unusual on that bank, but they were far more comical when the stoat was in his white winter dress. The rabbits were almost always run down, and he had trained his sheep-dogs to attack the stoat; at which they were soon so expert as very rarely to miss being the rabbit's avenger.

When I was guarding a roe-escape from Strona Fyne Wood, on Arrochar estate, in 1876, a rabbit bounced along the run, pursued by an enormous stoat at a sling-gallop. My roe-charge ended the latter's hunting days, when he proved as formidable a male specimen as ever ran a rabbit's track. He was well worth preserving, and the stuffer (a retired game-keeper) capped my recital by one of his own. He

found a dead rabbit, freshly killed and warm. A stoat's tracks in the snow tempted him to follow them. About a hundred yards off another rabbit lay in similar plight. The murderer's footmarks again betrayed him. Quickly tracing them, he heard a rabbit's scream, and saw the stoat in the act. Fired and shot him.

The weasel, only half the size of the stoat, is more than a match for either a full-grown rabbit or rat. I was amused by an account of one of these combats, related to me by a friend who had just witnessed it, while riding along the public road, near Wargrave, in Berkshire. A weasel had attacked a large Norway rat, which seemed to think discretion the better part of valour. As he was retreating, he always wheeled about, raising himself on his hind-legs when attacked in rear. As soon as the weasel heard the sound of the horse's feet, he hid behind a wall, but the poor rat was so completely done up as to suffer himself to be seized by the tail.

There are many conjectures as to the cause of pure white or pied pheasants suddenly appearing in a preserve which had only been stocked with the common coloured birds. The most reasonable solution seems to be that white blood, although remote, *might* appear

after several generations. I have been led to think so, from seeing a whole brood of pheasants turn out milk-white, when the parents were both of the ordinary kind. More often, however, there are only one or two white birds of the same hatch. At Rossdhu, one white hen was observed the second season after pheasants were turned out. It was unfortunately caught in a vermin-trap in the autumn. Several years elapsed before any more were seen, when one cock and two hens appeared among the other pheasants collected on the stubbles at the beginning of winter. These were most probably hatched in the same nide. Since then several more have been noticed at different periods. Pied pheasants have never been seen there, although in many places they are less rare than the white.[1] I killed one, very prettily marked, in Roxburghshire, which I put up several times before getting a shot at it. The tail and wing-pinions were pure white; head, neck, and back spotted with white feathers, and legs the colour of a white fowl's. The spurs were exceedingly long and sharp, which, together with its size and brilliancy of plumage, showed it must have been very old.

As there are many preserves where neither pied nor white pheasants have ever been heard of, I am strongly of opinion that a sprinkling of white pheasants have originally been imported, which may have

[1] Since writing the above, pied pheasants are not uncommon on the Rossdhu preserves.

partially extended their ramifications. Most sportsmen will have observed something of the same kind when rabbit-shooting—a black fellow suddenly starting up amidst multitudes of the common grey. I recollect once seeing, in the middle of a populous rabbit-warren, four very young black ones, the only sable inhabitants of the colony. I have often watched them from a tree, and noted that they always kept close together, and frequented the same hole. No doubt they were of the same litter. In my case of wild rabbits there is a yellow one from Argyleshire, and another of slate-blue from Kirkcudbright, shot by my sons. Both varieties are often met with in their respective counties.

Quite distinct from the above is the albino, several notices of which variety I inserted in the 'Edinburgh Evening Courant' of January 15, 1849. I select the two following, as being particularly curious. "A cream-coloured hart is now roaming Lord Breadalbane's celebrated forest, the Black Mount. But perhaps the most interesting of these *lusus* is a beautiful roe of the purest white, which haunts the tangled copses of Craig-an-James, on the banks of Loch Lomond. This fairy-like creature, so harmonising with the romantic district it frequents, was first observed last spring, when a fawn, by the keepers of Sir James Colquhoun of that Ilk, on whose property it is. Its eyes are red, and, what is very remarkable, it does not vary its colour according to the season.

This is the more unaccountable, as the roe always changes the chestnut red of summer for the dark mouse-colour of winter. This winter dress prevents the animal from being readily seen, when the coverts are thin and bare and the trees stripped of their leaves, and is one among the thousand provisions for these creatures, so defenceless and so often assailed, by the Hand that formed them all. The instinct, however, of the species leads our white-robed dryad to suppose herself, when squatted, as safe as her sober-coated companions, though her colour at once betrays her. The alpine hare, on the contrary, not being an *exception*, but a *distinct* race, seems fully aware of its conspicuous winter appearance, and, when the snow is off the ground, always seeks to hide among the light-grey rocks or thick patches of heather."

I am sorry to say that this curiosity was unable to bear the only few days of severe weather the following winter. It was found in a dying state among the snow, which its colour almost rivalled in purity. My brother had it stuffed.

About the same time, a red-deer calf appeared in the Black Mount as white as a sheep. This yearling could be made out on the hill at a mile's distance, among heather or rocks.

There was a pure white rook in the late Edinburgh Zoological Gardens in 1851, taken out of a nest at Dalkeith. The brood contained several black ones besides, one of which was brought away for company

and by way of contrast to the albino. The ivory and ebony were both in fine polish the last time I saw them.

In all creatures that put on their white winter dress, there is a dark spot, left as hostage for their again appearing in summer hue; but albinos have always the same unvarying sickly white.

The hooded or Royston crow of England must either be different in its habits from that of Scotland, or naturalists of the south are much mistaken in their observations on this bird. Bewick and others make a marked difference between the Royston and carrion crows, saying that the "former arrive with the woodcock, and take their departure in spring to breed." Now, in Scotland, there appear to me nearly as many hooded as carrion crows all summer, and *both* are called by the common people "hoodie-craws." Nests are constantly found with one of both kinds; and I have noticed that the male is generally hooded, and the female black. The young also are mixed. Bewick says that, in more northern parts, the Royston crow remains the whole year, subsisting on sea-worms, shell-fish, &c. Now I have remarked that the black crow is nearly as often to be met with on the sea-shore as the Royston, and is equally fond of shell-

fish. Those hooded crows on the sea-shore are much lighter in the colour, and more apt to live in pairs than the inland ones, which I don't recollect ever seeing build together. I have, however, often found nests where both male and female were black. The food of *inland* Royston and black carrion crows is alike; their habits are the same; they are also found always in company when the young leave the nest. A gamekeeper, of some experience in trapping vermin, informs me that two Roystons and two black may be hatched in the same nest; also, that sometimes the male is hooded, and sometimes the female. In Mull, the Royston crow is by far the most formidable foe to game, for one of these birds will destroy as many grouse in the egg as twenty golden eagles will after they are full fledged.

One morning in January, my boy, when leaving home for the Edinburgh Academy, noticed what he called a foreign bird with "a fine top" feeding upon the fruit of the sweet-brier rose, in our garden at Portobello. As the train was about to start, he was unable to warn me of this rarity. At feeding-time next day, the crested foreigner again took possession of his bush, and, not content with satisfying his own hunger, drove away all the natives from their morning meal. Whenever I got my eye on him, I saw that he was a male waxwing (the Bohemian chatterer),

and, of course, in fine plumage at that time of year. His crest and bearing made him look exactly like a miniature jay. He twisted off two or three large hips, swallowed them whole, rested for a while, then repeated the operation, always clearing the bush of company. After watching his tyrannical conduct, I took the liberty of adding him to my list of stuffed specimens. It was rather curious that he should have taken up his quarters in our crescent, surrounded by houses on all sides.

When tenant of the Blackhall shootings (Deeside) many years ago, I had ample opportunities of watching the habits of the crossbills. They were pretty easily seen, especially in spring and autumn. At pairing-time the male and female were often perched together, and were so tame that my son twice strung both at a shot. One of these pairs is in our collection; and as the female has the bill crossed the reverse way (a rare occurrence), when they face each other both crosses are seen at the same side. From the circumstance of there being so many mated birds in April and May, there is no doubt that nests are common in the pine and fir woods, though we never searched for them. In autumn and the beginning of winter they congregate in flocks of fifteen to thirty. As soon as their feeding was over they assembled at

favourite puddles of rain-water amongst the trees, where they drank and bathed with great enjoyment, the rich tints of their plumage harmonising beautifully with the fallen leaves scattered around.

In consequence of a summons from Adams of the Bass Rock, last March, I went down by a morning train to North Berwick, where he agreed to meet me, for a cruise in the Firth after the eider-ducks. Each year a few of these Norwegians remain among the rocky islets of the Forth for the purpose of incubation. On the Bass there was only one nest last season; but they are more apt to hatch on the rocks of "The Lamb" and "Fiddery," and even in the bluff headlands of the coast. Their nests are not easily found, especially as the duck is so close a sitter. As the eiders had not paired, I expected a good view of them swimming in small companies, and perhaps a chance shot at a drake from a large single gun I brought with me. The west wind scarcely dimpled the sea; so, with the exception of one long shot which did not touch, no eiders would allow a nearer approach than some hundred yards. The drakes had a singular appearance on wing—the upper half of their bodies snowy white, and the lower jet black. At the distance they rose, the division of colour

looked pretty equal. I was delighted with a good sight of that beautiful creature the long-tailed duck. He was diving in the harbour, and is nicknamed "Col the caunle-wick" by the fishermen, on account of his cry. We passed a very wild flock or two of velvet-ducks, but I saw none of the common scoter. Crowds of dunlins and knots, collectively named "mussel-pickers" by Adams, were tripping upon many of the points. The oyster-catchers ("sea-pyats") also held a meeting on the rocks of the Lamb. I was anxious to hear of the great northern diver, and one of our crew told me that he had sometimes seen it, and once fired a great many shots at a splendid "loon" without effect. The red-throated diver now and then rose near our boat, which he pointed out as a "gurl." The raven had shifted its quarters from the Bass to Fiddery, and, when nearing the islet, we noticed the pair flying across to the opposite shore. The nest was under a screen of rock immediately overhanging a perpendicular cliff. It was quite snug from the weather. Although we could not see into the nest, there were most likely eggs, as the raven lays so early. All winter, the great cormorant roosts at night upon the Bass. They were now in their superb breeding plumage, and, from the white patch of feathers on each thigh, they have obtained the flash name of the "letter-o'-mark." The boatmen fancied the birds under three years, which had not this mark, a distinct species. We saw numbers flying

backwards and forwards, or sitting patient upon a rock, imparting to it their own silent mournful character. Their credentials were quite apparent to the naked eye. The wind was in the wrong direction for landing, or I could easily have procured a "letter-o'-mark" flying to its perch in the evening, as they had not yet abandoned their winter dormitory.

The common buzzard is a capital mole-catcher; and at the beginning of winter, when the mole-hills appear, he generally takes possession of any convenient fallow-ground. Shifting from tree to tree, he watches the casting up of the earths, ready to leap down upon the mole as soon as his instinct assures him that it is close to the surface. Buzzards always watch prey in this manner, and jump down upon it from the perch. They destroy numbers of reptiles and small vermin, on which account they deserve the goodwill of the farmer.

The perch of the slow turbid rivers of the south of England are much larger and more ravenous than those of our Scottish lochs. In the Thames, and other still, deep waters, these monster perch are as great tyrants over unprotected shoals as pike.

In 1861, when dabbing for chub above Henley-on-Thames, a bleak dashed against the bank and stranded itself close to my feet. Directly in its wake a huge dorsal fin appeared above water, and an enormous perch charged the bank twice and almost succeeded in reaching its prey. I caught up the bleak, took off my grasshopper bait, and fixed the little fish in its place. The perch kept cruising about within a foot of the bank, evidently watching for the bleak to struggle back into the river. As soon, therefore, as I threw it before him, he bolted it at a gulp; but as the chub-hook was too small for the bait, he was so tenderly fixed as to slip off at once. We had a fair look at his dimensions, and he was evidently a fish of 3 lb. weight.

A short time afterwards, when trolling the preserved waters in Euston Park for jack, in one pool I landed four perch with my spinning dace, from 1½ to 2 lb. each. In the same pool I killed three jack, exactly 6 lb. each to an ounce, and so alike in shape and colour, that it was impossible to tell the one from the other! At the foot of the pool where it became shallow, something got hold of the dace and cut it in half, carrying away the head and shoulders. Suspecting an eel, I picked out the smallest dace in my can and allowed the bait to roll along the bottom. At the same spot it was again seized, but when I struck, the eel gave a struggle and managed to get away a second time. I then cut the tail off the dace

slantwise, as we do the parr-tail when trolling for salmon, and allowing plenty of time to gorge, I pulled up an eel 2½ lb. weight. Baiting again with a dace-tail, I secured its neighbour of 3½ lb. In all, 30 lb. weight out of one pool in about two hours' fishing. The stream where I had this success, in my best days I could almost have jumped across; but it was deep, sluggish, weedy, and muddy.

To my surprise, I noticed a mole take the water at the opposite bank, and swim fearlessly and safely over all these voracious fish. He was certainly in quest of prey, or of his female; for "the little gentleman in black velvet" is as gallant as he is greedy. He will fight as savagely as a red-deer stag for his harem, and when hunting for prey can track a worm like a sleuth-hound. When my son was keeping a roe-pass at Ballimore, a mole-hill began to heave before him. Presently a large dew-worm wriggled out in hot haste; but it was "out of the frying-pan into the fire;" for a robin, perched on a bush above, was instantly attracted by the frantic worm, and hopped down and pouched him in his fiery breast! Immediately the mole's snout appeared above ground on the worm's track, and making cautious casts, seemed surprised that his game had vanished; but when convinced that the hunt was "up," sank down again into his mother earth as silently as he rose to her surface.

When we had the shootings of Garth in Glenlyon, my son and I sprang a snipe of larger size than usual, and as it rose twice out of shot, and never twisted at all, it looked more like a woodcock than a snipe. At the third rise my son got a distant shot, and dropped it. With the exception of its larger size, the only difference between it and the mire-snipe is in the tail, which contains sixteen feathers instead of fourteen, the common number. The specimen is preserved in my woodcock and snipe case.

When crossing the stream Grudie, on the way to Cape Wrath, a little dipper was dexterously nipping up the fry of salmon or trout. On my son's calling the attention of Mackay Campbell (the Durness keeper) to the employment of the ousel, he remarked that he "had noticed his occupation for years, and the little freebooter richly deserved the blood-money laid on his head."

Since this was written, my son Roderick has sent another valuable contribution to our collection—a glossy specimen of the Cornish chough, shot in Islay, the only place, I believe, where it is now to be found in Scotland.

The last addition to our museum was made on the 12th of May 1880, when my son, Colonel Colquhoun, shot a fine male specimen of the sea-eagle (or erne), on the stupendous cliffs of Cape Wrath. It fell about seven hundred feet to the very edge of the rolling sea beneath. This feat entitles him to the "Hunters' Badge," the red deer, seal, and salmon having already been his victims.

FEN TERMS.

Many of the Fenmen terms for wild-fowl, at present and in the olden time, are so very interesting, that, contrary to my usual practice of relating only my own personal experiences, I am constrained to append a list. Although writing as a "popular" rather than a professional writer, I have not been very strict in applying them myself. Some of them are derived from the cry or habits of the birds, as a "gaggle" of geese, a "paddling" of ducks, &c.; some from their mode of flight, such as a "skein" of geese, a "wisp" of snipe, a "trip" of dotterel; and some from the nature of the ground they frequent, as a "desert" of lapwings, a "hill" of ruffs,—thus giving peculiarly appropriate terms of the birds.

New Style.

A herd of swans.
A gaggle of geese (swimming).
A skein of geese (flying).
A sord or suit of mallards.
A paddling of wild-ducks (on shore or swimming).
A team of wild-ducks (flying).
A spring of teal.
A company of widgeon.
A flight, rush, or dopping of dun-birds.
A dopping of sheldrakes.
A covert of coots.
A sedge of herons.
A wisp or walk of snipe.
A herd of curlews.
A wing or congregation of plovers.
A desert of lapwings.
A hill of ruffs.
A fling of oxbirds.
A trip of dotterel (also applied to ducks in small numbers).
A small number of widgeon or dun-birds is called a "bunch" or a "knob."
If few in number, a skein or herd is "small."
A "team" is short.

Old Style.

A teme of swannys.
A gaggyling of gese.
A sorde of malardys.
A teme of dukys.

A spryng of telys.
A doppyng of scheldrakys.
A coverte of cootes.
A herde of crauys.
A sege of heronys.
A herde of corlewis.
A congregaçon of plovers
A dysseyte of lapwynges.

THE END.

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